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S. K. SARASWATI

A Survey of Indian Sculpture

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By the Same Author

KURKIHAR, GAYA AND BODHGAYA
EARLY SCULPTURE OF BENGAL
BUDDHIST SHRINES IN INDIA
GLIMPSES OF MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE
A CENTURY OF HISTORIC PRINTS
INDIAN TEXTILES
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NORTH INDIAN PAINTING
EAST INDIAN MANUSCRIPT PAINTING
INDIAN ART AT THE CROSS-ROADS
ARCHITECTURE OF BENGAL
INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

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A Survey of Indian Sculpture

S. K. Saraswati

Munshiram Manoharlal
Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

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Second Revised Edition 1975

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PREFACE (Second Edition)

In presenting the second edition of *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, the author is happy to note his sense of gratification for the appreciation that the book had received from the reading public. In fact, the first edition had sold out within ten years of its publication. It is regretted that a second edition could not be made available at an earlier date. The high cost involved in bringing out a work on art delayed the publication of a second edition until Messrs Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. came forward with a generous proposal for publishing it. Sincere thanks of the author are due to the Publishers for this kind gesture of theirs.

In this edition the text has been thoroughly revised and to a certain extent enlarged with a view to incorporate new material and bring the matter up to date. In the first edition, for reasons of space, the story of mediaeval sculpture had been discussed in bare outline only. Opportunities permitting, the intention was to issue a companion volume dealing with the history of mediaeval Indian sculpture in all its facets. Mediaeval Indian sculpture, with its many regional ramifications each having manifold strains, is itself a vast subject of study involving a good amount of preliminary field work and several of the author's pupils are engaged in this work. It may not be proper to anticipate their findings before their studies are completed. At the same time it is felt that in a work on Indian sculpture the sculpture of the mediaeval phase deserves something more than a bare outline. In this second edition therefore the bare outline, that appeared as an Epilogue in the first, has been expanded into a chapter indicating the principal directions in the course of mediaeval Indian sculpture.

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In preparing this second edition and in course of its printing the author has received valuable help and advice from Dr. B. N. Mukherjee, one of his most distinguished pupils in the past and now a dear colleague. The author is extremely beholden to him for his kind and continued interest in this regard. Thanks are further due to Mr. G. Subbiah, M.A. and Miss Lakshmi Singh, M.A., two of the author's pupils in Banaras Hindu University and now working in Calcutta University for Ph.D., for the assistance rendered in the difficult task of the preparation of the Index. The institutions and individuals who have helped by extending courtesies in respect of photographs together with permission for reproduction need also grateful citations. Due records have been made of such courtesies in a separate page of Acknowledgements.

Lastly, the author has to thank the Publishers, especially their energetic and efficient Editorial Director, Sri Devendra Jain, for the unfailing care in seeing the edition through the press.

S. K. SARASWATI

The Asiatic Society, Calcutta,
Buddha Purṇimā, May 1975.

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PREFACE (First Edition)

There are several books on Indian sculpture, but they deal mostly with its philosophy or iconography, rather than with its history. My esteemed teacher, Dr. Stella Kramrisch, was the first to study Indian sculpture in relation to time and space; but her book *(Indian Sculpture,* Calcutta, 1933), splendid as it is in many ways, is not meant perhaps for the general reader. A history of Indian Sculpture, setting forth in clear and comprehensible terms the various trends and tendencies that went to constitute Indian plastic tradition, was felt to be a necessity, and the present work is an attempt in that direction. It brings within its scope a vast field of study, and special emphasis is given to the origins and development of the basic strains and characteristics of Indian plastic art in a historical perspective. It has been my endeavour to interpret the changes of form through the ages as a logical, orderly and organic evolution. How far I have succeeded in this attempt, I leave to the judgment of discerning readers.

Śodhyo'yaṁ karuṇāvadbhiḥ kṛitibhir-me pariśramaḥ/

The extent of the present work is, however, limited in relation to the wide panorama of the subject, and it has not been possible to discuss in detail the history of mediaeval Indian sculpture which, with its many regional ramifications each having manifold strains, offers itself a vast field of study. I have indicated here only the general tenor of mediaeval sculpture in its principal expressions. If opportunities permit, it is intended to issue a companion volume dealing with the history of mediaeval Indian sculpture in all its details.

The book was sent to the press nearly three years ago. My

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indifferent health, coupled with my deputation to Nepal as Leader of the Survey of Manuscript Libraries, and certain technical difficulties in the printing of the plates hampered the progress of the work. The delay afforded me an opportunity to consult the two most outstanding publications of the recent years, one by Stella Kramrisch and the other by Heinrich Zimmer.

I am grateful to my esteemed colleagues in the University of Calcutta for their kind interest in this work. My former teacher, Dr. J. N. Banerjea, Carmichael Professor and Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, and Dr. Niharranjan Ray, Bagisvari Professor of Indian Art, have helped me with many valuable suggestions. Sri Nalini Nath Dasgupta, one of my distinguished colleagues, has kindly gone through the proofs with his characteristic carefulness and discernment. Sri Bratindra Nath Mukherji and Sri Dipak Sen, two of my pupils, have prepared the Index. To all of them I feel deeply indebted for the kind troubles they took for the work.

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, and the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, have been kind enough to lend me a large number of blocks from their respective collections. I express my sincere gratitude to the authorities of these institutions for their sympathies and courtesies in this respect.

Lastly, I have to thank my Publisher, Sri K. L. Mukhopadhyay, who, in spite of all inconveniences due to delay in publication, has shown eagerness and courtesy throughout, and my friend Sri Satyendra Chandra Kar, who has been of immense help to me in getting the book through the press.

S. K. SARASWATI

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Calcutta.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASR.	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports.*
Ep. Ind.	*Epigraphia Indica.*
JAS.	*Journal of the Asiatic Society,* Calcutta.
JASB.	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,* Calcutta.
JISOA.	*Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art,* Calcutta.
JPASB.	*Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,* Calcutta.
MASI.	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India.*
1st. ed.	S. K. Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture,* first edition. Calcutta, 1957.

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BEGINNINGS

The discovery of the Indus civilisations has carried back the antiquity of artistic activities in India to a very remote past. The Harappa civilisation which, according to widely accepted chronology, belongs to a period not earlier than the second half of the third millennium BC,[1] has bequeathed to us a number of sculptures in different materials and numerous seals with figures and inscriptions in an undeciphered script engraved upon them. The style of these objects is already mature indicating plastic practices further back. Small peasant communities are known to have grown up in Baluchistan and Sind as far back as the fourth millennium BC and explorations have succeeded in revealing a sequence of peasant cultures in secluded spots throughout the area.[2] In the earlier stages whatever artistic instinct existed among these isolated communities manifested itself in the creation of polychrome potteries with painted designs of a certain strength and simplicity characteristic of primitive workmanship. It is unfortunate that no remains of plastic arts have come to light in the sites of the earlier peasant cultures. About the first half of the third millennium BC two significant cultures are known to have flourished respectively in North and South Baluchistan. The remains of the northern culture are mostly found along the valley of the river Zhob after which the culture has been named. The southern culture is designated after the type site of Kulli in the Makran coast. To some extent these two cultures appear to coincide with each other in certain phases of their development and to overlap, in their last phases, with the Harappa culture of the Indus valley. It is in the terracotta figurines of the Zhob and the Kulli cultures that we recognise the earliest efforts at plastic activities in India.

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The Zhob as well as the Kulli sites have furnished a fair number of terracotta figurines of animals and women. The Kulli sites[3] are particularly prolific in this respect. Not a little interest attaches to the figurines of the humped bull of the Kulli sites because of the appearance of painted vertical stripes across the body and short transverse strokes down the schoulders and forelegs.* The eyes, again, are painted in and the roots of the horns and the neck are characteristically adorned by stripes. These painted adornments recall the treatment of the animal figurines on the Nundara pots and may indicate some religious association. The fact that large numbers of them have been found within restricted areas at such sites as Kulli, Shahi-tump, Mehi-damb, etc. suggests that they might have been offerings massed at a shrine, rather than mere toys or dolls. The uniformity of the type may indicate that they represent the Indian Brahmani bull which appears to have been an object of popular reverence even in those remote days, as they are now. The figurines vary from two to four inches in length and in spite of a rather coarse treatment and stumpy legs, a naturalistic modelling is evident in the other features. A prominent emphasis is given to the representation of the hump which adds to the forceful delineation of the figure as a whole.

Among the animal figurines those of the bull are the most plentiful and, in all probability, they had a religious association. Figurines obviously serving as children's toys appear also among the objects of the Kulli culture. Mention should particularly be made of a bull figurine from Mehi-damb with a hole pierced through each of the stumpy legs and through the hump. Evidently, terracotta wheels, such as have been found in other sites, were fitted to the axles passed through the leg holes, the hump hole being intended for the string to pull the figure along. Occasionally, bird whistles have been found, but the appearance of such objects might have been due to contacts with the Harappa culture.

The terracotta female figurines from the Kulli sites, though few in number in comparison with those of the bull, are also of great interest in the history of Indian sculpture. The female figurines bear no traces of paint. They exemplify a primitive technique in clay

*S.K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture* (1st ed.), figs. 9, 10 & 13.

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modelling, the form being reduced to a simple description of the main volumes corresponding to the principal parts of the body.* Whatever modelling is there is done by the fingers which pinch up or press down the clay according to the requirements of the form. Such features as the eyes, hair, navel, the breasts, etc. are fashioned by separate pellets or strips of clay applied to the modelled form. Ornaments and head-dresses—and there is an elaborate array of them—are also in the *appliqué* technique. It is possible that the artist found it convenient to work out such details in the flat. The figurines are almost all of the same type, differing only in the details of the jewellery and the head-dresses. The bodies usually end at the waists in splayed-out flat bottoms. The faces are coarsely modelled and are characterised by extremely narrow foreheads, pinched up noses and pierced circular pellets for the eyes. In no case is the mouth indicated. The breasts are usually concealed behind jewellery; where shown uncovered, they are indicated by applied pellets. The hands are usually *akimbo*; in rare instances only they are shown raised above the breasts. There is, again, another specimen from the type site of Kulli where the figure is shown with two infants held in the arms. In spite of the sketchy treatment of the features, each figure has an elaborate hair style and a profusion of jewellery which are done entirely in *appliqué*. The hair is usually coiled up over the head with a fillet round the forehead, the greater mass being looped behind into a heavy chignon resting against the nape of the neck. Occasionally, again, the hair falls over the shoulders in front in two broad plaits. The ears appear to be adorned with conical ornaments and around the neck are usually seen elaborate necklaces with oval or circular pendants. Sometimes, there is a high collar of beads. The arms are adorned with armlets and bangles.

The nature and purpose of such female figurines are, at present, obscure. The identical and archaic treatment of the face and the body and a conventional position of the hands, on either the waist or the breasts, may suggest some ceremonial or ritualistic association. Furthermore, the flat, spread-out bases of these figurines indicate that they were intended to be set up on some kind of stand or platform. It has been suggested on these considerations that these figurines were meant to represent a female divinity connected with the fertility or

*1st ed., figs. 2-4.

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mother cult of the ancient times. It is also possible that in these terracotta figurines the two concepts might have been combined. At the type site of Kulli there has been found a specimen with babies held in the arms and this may lend some support to the above suggestion.

We now turn to the terracotta figurines from the Zhob valley sites.[4] Among the animal figurines representations of the humped bull predominate. They are not, however, as plentiful as in the Kulli sites, nor do they bear any trace of paint. A fragment representing the fore-part of a horse from Periano-ghundai is of particular interest as the animal does not appear to have been known in the other cultures. It may be mentioned in this context that horse bones have been found in an earlier stratum at Rana-ghundai, thereby indicating that the animal was known in the region of the Zhob valley from rather early times. The bull figurines are, more or less, of the same type as at Kulli. They are, however, of a sturdier build and in certain instances one may recognise efforts at a greater modelling of the features implying a mature naturalistic sense. This is particularly noticeable in the figure of a bull from Periano-ghundai,[5] a well-preserved specimen except for the missing head, measuring a little over eight inches from the front to the back.* The feet, instead of being stumpy in shape, are more naturalistically modelled and the sturdy body gives an impression of immense vigour and lordly bearing. Compared with the Kulli bull figurines, this representation from Periano-ghundai shows a far greater artistic experience and may be recognised as one of the most successful animal portraits that have come down to us from that hoary past. As with the Kulli bulls, some ritualistic association of the Zhob figurines may also be presumed.

The female figurines of the Zhob valley indicate certain developments in the technique of the production of such terracottas. They are mostly fragmentary; but from a few better-preserved ones it appears that they also ended below the waist in flat-bottomed pedestals. The hands are uniformly missing in the specimens that have been discovered up till now and we are not in a position to ascertain how they were disposed. The modelling in each case is, no doubt, coarse and summary, but a developed plastic diction is noticeable in the treatment of the face as well as of the bust.† This can be found

*1st ed., fig. 11.
†*Ibid.*, figs. 6-7.

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in a few terracotta figurines discovered at Periano-ghundai, Kaudani and Moghul-ghundai. An attempt towards a more naturalistic delineation of the face is recognised in the indication of the mouth by an open slit just above the chin. The face is further characterised by a high, smooth forehead, an owl-beak nose and deep eyeholes, which were probably intended for insertion separately of pellets to serve as pupils. The bust, again, exhibits an advanced modelling in the representation of the full rounded breasts with the nipples indicated. A more naturalistic delineation of the volumes implies a developed plastic sense on the part of the Zhob artists. The Zhob figurines, like the Kulli ones, show elaborate head-dresses and jewellery, all separately executed and then applied. The head is usually hooded with a coif or a scarf which falls down the shoulders. A necklace in several strings adorns the neck, the lowest one having, in some cases, a circular pendant. The figurines are of a standard type and, like the Kulli figurines, possibly represent a divinity connected with the worship of a primitive fertility or mother goddess or a combination of both. Because of the large eye-sockets, which endow the face with the grim and severe aspect of a grinning skull, some scholars are inclined to recognise in these figurines a terrific embodiment of the primitive mother goddess.[6] It is possible, as already observed, that these sockets were intended for separate insertion of pupils. The practice of filling up the eye-sockets with separate inlay forming the pupils was common in the sculptures of the Harappa civilisation; and it appears reasonable that a similar technique was also employed in the treatment of the eyes of the terracotta female figurines of the Zhob culture. The appearance of a grinning skull, now presented by a Zhob female figurine, thus appears to have been due to the loss of the applied pupils and the fearful expression that one sees now was, in all probability, far from the original intention of the ancient modeller.

In primitive technique and with sketchy modelling these figurines from the Kulli and the Zhob sites represent the earliest extant remains of plastic art in India. In spite of their inadequate technique, they suggest a certain naivette and vigour usually characteristic of a primitive art. A certain stylisation is also evident not only in the treatment of the physiognomy of the figures, but also in that of the hair, head-dresses and the ornaments. The extremely limited scope of the primitive technique might have been responsible for such a stylisation.

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In the painted cattle figurines from the Kulli sites a schematic treatment is also noticeable in the regular arrangement of the stripes. It is possible that in these painted cattle figurines we have the sculptured replicas of the animal figurines on the painted potteries. The Kulli and the Zhob sites, at least in certain phases of their developments, seem to have coincided with each other, and certain contacts between the two cultures, though unknown in the present state of our knowledge, might not have been quite impossible. The Zhob figurines indicate an advance in plastic diction, as is evidenced in the attempt to render more naturalistic forms. The terracotta figurines of the Zhob valley seem to imply, hence, a sequence of the plastic style. In their latest phases the Kulli and the Zhob cultures appear to overlap with the Harappa culture of the Indus valley, roughly belonging to a period from the second half of the third millennium BC to the earlier half of the second. Among the remains of the Harappa culture there is a fair quantity of sculptural objects in a variety of materials revealing an astonishing skill in the rendering of form and movement There are indications that in these the early plastic tradition, as evidenced in the Kulli and the Zhob figurines, is likely to have been followed. The Harappa culture had significant contacts with the Kulli culture on the one hand and with the Zhob on the other and a sequence of plastic tradition may apparently be recognised.

The Harappa culture[7] indicates a change from the hills to the plains, from the small and isolated peasant communities to the large and highly organised urban communities and from a primitive pastoral economy to a sophisticated agricultural and commercial economy. The culture itself covers a vast region connected by a great river system forming a natural highway of communication. Remains of the Harappa settlements stretch from the Makran coast to Kathiawar and northwards to the Himalayan foothills. Not only that; the Harappa culture penetrated as far as Alamgirpur in the Yamuṅā basin and shades off into sub-Harappa and 'successor' cultures as far south as the lower Narmadā valley. Among the many sites of the Harappa culture that have been known up till now, some represented small villages, other small towns, while about three hundred and fifty miles apart were situated two large cities, Harappa on the left bank of the river Rāvi in the Punjab and Mohenjodaro on the right bank of the river

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Indus in Sind. What impresses the observer most is the complete uniformity in the various objects over this vast area—in the pottery vessels, in the houses built of burnt brick, in the stamp seals with similar designs, and in the standard system of weights. This absolute uniformity implies the existence of a strong and centralised authority regulating the life and activities of the people over this extensive region.

Among the achievements of the Harappa civilisation may be mentioned a plastic art that concerned itself largely with the representation of forms in relief as well as in the round. The materials are terracotta, stone and bronze, and in the latter two the achievements are found to be of a developed and stylised order, far ahead of the tradition expressed in the terracotta figurines. The contrast presented by the two traditions—one in terracotta and the other in stone, steatite and bronze—offers a rather perplexing problem in view of the apparent contemporaneity of the objects. It is possible that the former represents a popular plastic idiom of the commoner people, perhaps following the terracotta tradition of the peasant cultures of Kulli and Zhob, while the stone and bronze sculptures represent an art of the higher section of the people, already highly sophisticated because of their elevated position in the society The distinction in art idioms was, in all probability, due to class distinctions which appear to have emerged as a result of the predominant commercial economy that provided the mainstay of this civilisation.

Although primitive in appearance, the terracotta female figurines—and these are by far the most numerous—are, as a rule, carefully done, the attention, however, being given mainly to detail and finish. Like the figurines of the peasant cultures they are done entirely by the hand by pinching up or pressing down the clay by thumb and fingers according to the needs of the form. Eyes are also made of two separate pellets and the mouth, again, of a small strip applied to the face with a deep straight indentation to indicate the lips. The breasts, wherever shown, are also by separate pellets or by cones (fig. 1). The navel, when shown, is a deep circular depression; occasionally, it is found concealed by a circular pellet forming part of an elaborate girdle (fig. 2). Usually, the figurines are furnished with elaborate head-dresses and ornaments, all executed in separate strips and pellets and then fixed at their appropriate positions. Sometimes, such strips or pellets are slightly touched up for a more realistic effect. Many of the figurines are

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found to wear a distinctive head-dress of a curious fan-like (pannier) shape, rising from the back of the head and held in position by a fillet round the forehead. The figurines, as a rule, are burdened with jewellery consisting of elaborate neck collars, long chains, armlets, bangles, anklets, earrings, etc. In most cases the figures are nude except for a short girdle round the waist fastened by some kind of clasp. Sometimes, a short loin cloth is shown swathed round the hips several times. The technique employed in the production of the figures, and their dresses and ornaments recalls the one already noticed in the Kulli and the Zhob figurines with which the figurines of the Harappa culture may be said to have been closely related. There is, however, a greater elaboration of the head-dresses and hair styles, as well as of the ornaments. Moreover, the Harappa figurines do not represent mere busts with splayed-out flat bottoms below the waists, as the Kulli and the Zhob figurines do. The Harappa figurines were modelled complete with legs and hands. The latter, again show a variety of positions, whether standing or seated. In the figurines of the peasant cultures, the hands are usually attached to the body, whether they rest on the hips or on the breasts. In the Harappa figurines, however, they are completely detached and either hang down along the sides or are spread out, or carry something with one or both the hands. In these respects the Harappa figurines suggest a greater freedom of movement indicating a stylistic advance in relation to the figurines of the peasant cultures; the religious association of both appears to be the same however. Secular figures, such as female kneading dough, nursing mother, crawling child, etc. also appear among the Harappa figurines.

Among the large number of terracotta human figurines discovered in the sites of the Harappa culture we have a small percentage of male representations which are significantly unknown in the peasant cultures. The male figurines are more numerous in the type site of Harappa where they form about one-third of the total terracotta finds. At other sites they are extremely rare and this comparative scarcity of the male representations indicates that they were not very popular with the clay modellers. The specimens that have been found have been explained as productions to serve as children's toys. The male figurines are commonly found seated with the hands either on or round the knees, or joined in front in an attitude of devotion. Sometimes, one

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of the legs is found doubled underneath, and in rare instances we have figures squatting on haunches. Very rarely are they shown standing,* a pose usually characteristic of the female figurines. Except in a few instances, they are shown completely nude and the dress, wherever represented, consists of a scanty girdle with a short loin cloth wrapped round the waist. A few figures are also found to wear a short beard under the chin. The technique employed in the production of such figurines is the same as that used in case of the female figurines.

Terracotta animal figurines are also found in large numbers in the sites of the Harappa culture. In these figurines there may be recognised a greater naturalistic modelling, though the forms retain those of the specimens found in the peasant cultures. Apart from the bull, a large variety of animals may be seen to be represented in Harappa art. We may cite, for instance, the figures of the monkey, the ram, the buffalo (*cf.* also a remarkable specimen in copper), the goat, the rhinoceros, the elephant, the pig, etc. Animals are also found represented in faience, engraved on steatite seals, etc. and the fauna depicted in Harappa art may be said to be varied and extensive. They are particularly helpful in reconstructing the climatic conditions of the region in those remote days. It will be possible for us to take note only of the typical and significant animal representations having a bearing on the subject under discussion.

Among the bull figurines, the short-horned species occurs most frequently and is represented usually with the head lowered, as if ready for a charge. Sometimes, it is shown with garlands round the neck, occasionally with a bell suspended from it. The dewlap, again, is characteristically indicated by ridges or by separate strips touched up. In some instances the artist has shown a masterly grasp of the animal's form along with its vigour and dynamism (fig. 3). Next in importance come the representations of the humped or Brahmani bull, nearly as numerous, and in a form with which we are already familiar in the peasant cultures. In Harappa art they are more naturalistically modelled with an exaggeration of the hump and the dewlap. Of the representations of other animals, the ram,† the monkey and the rhinoceros figure prominently. Mention should particularly be made of the figure

*1st ed., fig. 1.
†1st ed., figs. 12 and 14.

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of a monkey from the type site of Harappa, admirably posed as climbing a tree with hands and feet firmly gripping the branch. The hair is indicated by incised lines and the tail is shown raised up with the end turning down. Here we have a naturalistic representation of the monkey which can hardly be expected in those early times. The ram appears more commonly in faience, though its delineation in terracotta is not entirely unknown. The representation is usually naturalistic with the fleece indicated by a series of nail marks. The goat with the twisted horns and shaggy beard is also known. The rhinoceros appears to have been a favourite subject with the Harappa modellers and we have a number of specimens varying from the roughly executed figurines to the more naturalistic representations of the animal. The crude and roughly made ones hardly appear to be anything but children's handiworks. We have also more successful representations in which the wrinkled hide of the animal is naturalistically delineated by hatching or by pitting, sometimes with strips of clay applied around the withers and hind quarters in simulation of the folds in the tough hide. Various kinds of birds and reptiles are also found among the terracotta figurines of the Harappa culture.

Among the terracotta objects of Harappa art there may also be recognised delightful toys. A few of these are of exceptional interest. Mention should be made, for instance, of animals with movable articulated heads that waggle with a string, and monkeys with zigzag perforations intended for sliding down a flexible stick. Along with the articulated figurines may also be mentioned toy animals mounted on wheels, a very common motif among the objects of the Harappa culture and not unlike those occasionally found in the Kulli sites. Toy carts, including one in bronze with a canopy above, have also been commonly found in the Harappa sites. They are similar in shape to the traditional vehicles used until recently and judging from their number they appear to have been very popular with the children of the Harappa civilisation. An unusual design is also occasionally found in the curved shape of the cart frame. Fragmentary models of box-like chariots, quite distinct from the primitive cart-shape, have also been occasionally found. A bronze model of such a chariot has also been recovered from the type site of Harappa. They were replicas, no doubt, of the carts and chariots actually in use in the Harappa civilisation. One other terracotta object, also associated with a kind of vehicle,

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has been discovered at Mohenjodaro and is of particular interest. It represents a toy chariot of which the forepart consists of the head of a horned ram and the rest, the body and the tail, of a bird. The hole across the sides of the body was evidently intended for the axle with a pair of wheels and the hole down the neck for a string to pull it along. This type of bird chariot is also known in later times and several examples have been found at Basarh (ancient Vaiśālī) in the Muzaffarpur district of North Bihar. They have been discovered in the Gupta level, and the type is closely similar to the bird chariots from the sites of the Harappa culture. Apparently, the type continued to be in use till the Gupta times, and it is not impossible that the representations of the bird chariot in Chinese art of the Han period were derived from India. It should be mentioned in passing that the carts are either two-wheeled or four-wheeled, the wheels being solid, and have only one shaft each. Among other toy objects mention should also be made of bird whistles which are of frequent occurrence in the Harappa sites and are not unlike those referred to in connection with Kulli terracotta art.

It is relevant to describe briefly the technique of production of the terracotta figurines of Harappa art, human as well as animal. Entirely modelled by hand in the method already in evidence in the peasant cultures mentioned before, the figurines were all solidly built, with the exception of the few animal figures of bigger size which are known to have been worked over an inner core of straw. The core was consumed in the firing process thereby leaving the inside hollow. The small masks, of which several specimens have come to light, appear to have been pressed from moulds, as the thinness of the objects would indicate. After firing the figurines, as a rule, were covered with a red wash—light as well as deep—and, sometimes, with a deep and polished red slip that stood the weathering remarkably.

Apart from the vast mass of terracotta sculpture, the Harappa civilisation has also bequeathed to us several remarkable pieces of statuary in the round, in stone as well as in copper or bronze. From Mohenjodaro as many as eleven such pieces of stone statuary have come up, besides a copper or bronze figure of a girl, perhaps a dancer. Further, two stone statuettes have been discovered from the type site of Harappa. As artistic achievements these sculptures, although all are fragmentary, stand out from the terracotta figurines, and appear

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to imply a different plastic expression. Again, they can be divided into two significant groups distinguished by two different kinds of feeling for form. In one belong the two stone statuettes from Harappa and the female figure from Mohenjodaro. In the second fall the limestone and steatite sculptures from Mohenjodaro. Archaeological evidence regarding the exact level of the findspots of the Harappa statuettes has only been vaguely recorded, and there is a view that they belonged to a much later period. The Mohenjodaro sculptures have, however, been found in convincing archaeological contexts which leave no doubt about their ascription to the period of the Harappa civilisation. Certain significant identities between the two groups of sculptures are also evident in the use of inlays and separate attachment of ornaments, a practice that is unknown in Indian sculpture of the historic periods. On these considerations it seems more than probable that the two groups, in spite of their difference in feelings for forms, belonged to the same period and were both products of the Harappa civilisation.

Of the two Harappa statuettes, the male torso in red stone represents a well known piece of sculpture. The figure is shown completely nude (fig. 4). The head and the hands are missing and the legs from the thighs broken away. The head and the hands, made of separate pieces, were fitted through the socket holes respectively down the neck and the shoulders. Two large circular depressions in front of the shoulders in the region of the clavicle, apparently hollowed by a tubular drill, seem particularly intriguing. According to Benjamin Rowland "these holes may have had something to do with the support of the arms which, like the missing head, were separately attached to the torso."[8] It is possible also that they were, perhaps, intended for insertion of circular ornaments as inlays, the tiny holes in the nipples being also meant for a similar purpose. Though represented in a strictly frontal pose, the figure with its massive portliness is conceived in full three-dimensional view which implies a mature knowledge in the rendering of the human form. The execution is imbued with a simple naturalism, refined and truthful particularly in the modelling of the fleshy parts. This naturalism almost borders on realism, not in the Greek sense of a muscular structure, but in the Indian manner of a symbolic representation of the anatomy in which "the articulation of the body is realized in broad convex planes of modelling"[9] contained within a suave and fluid

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contour. Infront the shoulders are shown slightly thrown back and the treatment of the prominent and distended abdomen corresponds to that of Indian sculpture of Kushāṇa date. The treatment of the back (fig. 4) with its subtle curves and sensitive rendering of the volumes is no less impressive. The vivacity of modelling is apparent in every feature and also through the entire figure where all the parts seem to be organically and dynamically related to one another by a gliding linearism, in the front, at the back and also at the sides. There is, at the same time, the suggestion of an inner tension recognised by some scholars as a device to reveal the pulsating existence of the vital breath *(prāṇa)* within. Such qualities make up the basic form of Indian sculpture and in this statuette one recognises the Indian sculptor's amazing skill in "producing not only a sense of plastic volume but also in representing the soft quality of the flesh."[10]

The other Harappa statuette represents a dancing figure and is executed in dark grey slate. Perhaps ithyphallic originally, the figure now is merely a fragment (fig. 5). The head and the hands, separately affixed through the socket holes in the neck and upper parts of the forearms, are missing, while the legs (the left including a part of the thigh) broken away. From the portion surviving it appears that the right leg was firmly planted on the ground and the left was drawn high, while the body from the waist upward was turned to the left. The arms, again, appear to have been thrown out to the left in the swirl of the dance. From the abnormal thickness of the neck Marshall infers that the figure might have been three-headed, though he was aware of the possibility that the head might have been that of an animal.[11] Whatever the case, the attitude suggests one of a rhythmic dance, not violent, but graceful and poised. Compared to the previous figure, the modelling is to a certain extent, summary; yet the supple and gliding contours, together with the sensitive rendering of the volumes and three-dimensional treatment, endow the figure with a naturalism approximating to that of the red stone torso.

The bronze statuette of a young girl from Mohenjodaro, in spite of its rough workmanship, may also be classed with the above two Harappa statuettes. The figurine is in the round and, except for the feet, is in excellent preservation. The legs are bent with the left slightly set forward (fig. 6). The right hand is placed on the right hip in what Marshall describes as a "half-impudent posture,"[12] and the

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left hangs down in front. The hair is tucked at the back in a heavy plait that rests against the right shoulder. The total effect is that of a pert and perky attitude. Among the ornaments, the most remarkable are the coils of bangles that adorn the left arm from below the arm-pit down to the wrist, as against the two armlets and the two bangles round the right upper arm and wrist respectively. In details of hair-dressing and ornaments Stuart Piggott recognises in this bronze figurine "a sophisticated version of the female type known in the rough, schematised pottery figurines of the Kulli culture."[13] The disproportionately long arms and legs are perhaps due to the peculiar technique of working in metal. The urge to draw out the metal into long wires might have given such a curious shape to the arms and the legs. In spite of the slenderness of the limbs, the figurine is not without a certain vigour. The treatment of the back and the hips, the buttocks and the legs is conspicuous for a naturalism in modelling and alertness in movement. This bronze statuette appears to be inspired, hence, by the same feelings and concepts which one recognises in the two Harappa stone statuettes.

As opposed to the conception of the above three figures, appears a group of stone sculptures, eleven in all, from Mohenjodaro which are of a different class altogether. These sculptures are more formal in appearance and seem to belong to a hieratic tradition. Unfortunately, all the sculptures are fragmentary, a few weathered beyond recognition. They were all executed in comparatively softer kinds of stone, usually limestone and alabaster, and one in steatite. The steatite piece is the best preserved of them all, and presents remarkable features. It represents the head and bust of a male figure, draped in an elaborate shawl-like garment passing round the left shoulder and under the right arm leaving the right shoulder bare (fig. 7). This mode of wearing the drapery, it is to be mentioned, is noticed also in later Indian art, particularly in Buddha images of Kushāṇa date and occasionally thereafter. The shawl bears all over a repetitive trefoil design filled up with red pigment. The figure wears a short beard and a closely cut moustache indicated by perfunctory vertical incisions. The hair, also similarly indicated, is parted in the middle and brushed back. A plain fillet with a circular clasp in front surrounds the head and is tied at the back in a knot with the loose ends hanging down. The nose is straight and well-formed, but unfortun-

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ately the tip with the nostrils is damaged. The mouth is full with thick and fleshy lips and the ears are of the shape of double shells, each with a deep hole in the centre. The forehead is extremely low and receding and the eyes are elongated and shown half-closed with the upper lids slightly drooping. They were filled with shell inlay remains of which are still seen in one of the eyes. In the downward glance of the eyes some scholars recognise an attitude of concentration in *yoga* (meditation) and a corresponding fixation of the mind. The general finish is exceptionally good, but there is nothing in it of the naturalism of the former group, the whole body being rigidly compressed into garments.

Of a more or less similar conception is the alabaster figure of a seated male, also from Mohenjodaro, although the execution is rather coarse and summary. The head is unfortunately missing. Here too we recognise a certain abstraction of the body draped in a kilt-like garment; yet a more developed sense of modelling is evident in the treatment of the bare right arm, shoulder and chest, and in the soft texture of the flesh which the artist has been able to impart to the bare parts of the body. The kilt-like garment appears to have been the popular dress of the Harappa people and is evident in a few other sculptures, also from Mohenjodaro.

Among the sculptures from Mohenjodaro mention should be made also of several detached heads in limestone which present striking dissimilarities in facial types, suggesting some attempt, perhaps, at portrait likenesses. But the examples are so weathered that it is difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion in this regard. Of these, the most remarkable is the one with prominent cheek bones, a fairly large nose, a wide forehead and a medium-sized mouth with a thin upper lip and a slightly fleshy lower one (fig. 8). The head shows a closely cropped beard, indicated by deep incisions, and a wavy hair style with chevron-wise bands and tucked behind in a knot at the back. A string-like fillet round the forehead keeps the knot in position; the upper part of the knot consists of three separate twists of hair marked by oblique depressions. A small round-headed hair pin is seen on the left-hand side of the lower knot. This elaborate dressing of the hair appears to have been a popular style among the Harappa people and may be recognised, at least, in one other limestone head, unfortunately much corroded. The face is imbued with soft and sensitive touches

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to which the curious saucer-shaped ears present a marked contrast.

Inspite of the apparent differences in the conception of the human form, these two groups of statuaries are significant as anticipating already the basic characteristics of Indian sculpture of the later ages. The strong naturalistic sense, exhibited by the former group, along with their plastic volumes and gliding movements, represents inalienable components of Indian sculptural art throughout the whole range of its history. The naturalism and anatomical truthfulness, particularly of the two stone statuettes from Harappa, appear to be startling and some scholars might be inclined to class them with the best products of the classical art of Greece. But, as Marshall describes, "the set of the figures is characteristically Indian."[14] Moreover, they imply qualities without which Indian sculpture of the subsequent periods can hardly be thought of. The strange identity of the red stone torso from Harappa with the sculptures of Kushāṇa date has already been noted. The slender limbs, the attenuated waist and the tilted hips of the bronze female figurine from Mohenjodaro are closely associated with the ideal of female beauty, as evidenced in subsequent literature and art. The second group, particularly the steatite sculpture from Mohenjodaro, has also a significant link with subsequent Indian art in the abstraction of the form and in the treatment of the half-closed eyes suggesting a glance in *yoga* concentration. Far distant though, the sculptures of the Harappa civilisation appear to have been the ancestors of the multitudes of Indian images and figures carved or modelled millenniums later.

The Harappa modellers also showed a considerable skill in modelling animal figures in the round in faience and in metal, and their innate plastic sense is evidenced in the bronze figure of a buffalo and the faience model of a monkey, both from Mohenjodaro.

A discussion of Harappa art must remain incomplete without a reference to the numerous seal engravings which are the most characteristic among the objects of the Harappa civilisation. They are made of steatite and two main types are recognised—the first, usually square, with carved designs and inscriptions, the second, rectangular with inscriptions only. The inscriptions are in a script that still remains undeciphered. The first is furnished with a perforated boss at the back for a string, while the second has a convex back with a

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hole through the length from side to side, apparently for an identical purpose. Occasionally, there have been found round seals also. Among the numerous seals, only two are cylindrical, but these two are also of steatite and of Indian workmanship.

The most characteristic design on the seals consists of intaglio figures of animals, invariably shown in profile. Some of these animals are evidently imaginary, such as unicorns, (fig. 9) and chimeras; but others portray living beasts, wild or domesticated, some of which, as the representations illustrate, the Harappa artists had the opportunity of studying very closely and intimately. The noble series of bulls, buffalos and bisons, engraved on the seals, represent forceful and monumental compositions resulting from a close familiarity with, and minute observation of, the animals in question. Not only are they faithful renderings of the physical forms of the animals, but also do they constitute the most successful studies of their nature and character. In the representation of the humped bull (fig. 10) the noble dignity of the animal is evident in its mighty body surging with pent-up energy. The spirited attitude of the bufallo, with the head raised and turned to one side so as to portray the vigorous sweep of the powerful horns, is equally effective. The same bold draughtsmanship is also manifest in the arched shape of the bison. In every instance the muscles seem to ripple under the skin in the most naturalistic manner, and though the conventional profiles allow little scope for the expression of movement, a vigorous dynamism is inherent in the powerful forms with full and surging volumes bounded by strong and sure outlines. Considering the small scale in which the figurines had to be worked, and that also in intaglio, one cannot but admire the commendable success with which the artist has engraved the lineaments and features of the animals so surely and effectively. It is not to be imagined, however, that all the animal representations on the seals are equally convincing productions. The touch of perfection, which comes only from a close and intimate observation, is lacking in certain instances, though sometimes the outlines are as bold and precise.

Apart from the animals, certain other motifs and designs on the seals may be found to have interesting significance to the history of subsequent Indian sculpture. The linear stylisation of the trees and the particular mode of rendering the leaves, as we find in some of

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the seals, have striking affinities in later Indian art. The multiplicity of limbs, an outstanding attribute of Indian divinities of the later days, is also manifest in Harappa art in the representations of a three-faced male god, seated in the posture of a *yogin*, on several seals. The god is provided with horns on the head and, in one instance, is found to be surrounded by several animals. Marshall recognises in this representation the prototype of the Indian god, Śiva Paśupati or Śiva as the lord of the beasts, and his view has been generally accepted. Kramrisch notices further several peculiar associations of the tree with the human figure wherefrom certain characteristically Indian motifs might have been evolved. A horned goddess is represented on the seals, either between two stems of trees or on the trunk of one, and the motif might have some connection, as has been suggested, with the evolution of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* or the halo, characteristic of the image of an Indian divinity throughout the long period of Indian art. Many other instances may be cited, but the topic may better be closed with a significant quotation from Kramrisch:

"Other devices on the seals, sealings and on terracottas are also relevant, if as motifs only, for the future : the centrifugal combination of various figures or their parts diverging from one centre; the many-headed divinity and the standing figures with long arms so that they touch the knees; the overhigh heads of the goddesses which anticipate the *ushṇīsha*, i.e. the excrescence on the head of Buddha images; the mode of sitting; the part played by Nāga (serpent); and the alignment of repeated figures, as well as the freely symmetrical arrangement of single figures on the surface of the relief."[15]

Plastic art in India, so far as extant remains go, seems to begin with the peasant cultures of Kulli and Zhob, and attains a maturity in the urban Harappa culture, where the activity is found to be more extensive and varied. In spite of different kinds of feelings and expression, the Harappa art may be said to have already established a conception of art form the fundamentals of which persist through the entire range of Indian sculpture. The trends and tendencies, already established, outlasted the struggles of many novel civilisations and remained active as long as Indian sculpture itself. It has been rightly said hence that the plastic art of the Indus civilisations contains an accumulated store of the tradition; but there it does not come to an end. As the subsequent phases will show, it persisted

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further and underlay Indian sculpture as long as it remained creative.[16]

NOTES

[1] The chronology of the Harappa civilisation has been established by its contacts with Mesopotamian civilisation. During the time of Sargon of Akkad pottery, seals, beads and other objects are known to have reached the Mesopotamian cities from the Harappan sites. For Sargon we have now a widely accepted date of about 2350 BC. Recent explorations have also led to the discovery in the islands of Bahrein and Failka in the Persian gulf of round seals with the strongest likeness to those from Mohenjodaro. At Kot Diji, 25 miles east of Mohenjodaro, one of the twin great cities of the Harappa civilisation, sixteen strata have been recognised in section; of these, the top three have yielded pure Harappa material, while the fourth is mixed. The uppermost of the twelve underlying layers, immediately beneath the Harappa layers, produced a Carbon 14 date of 2463 BC with a possible error of 140 years on either side (Pennsylvania University Analysis).

[2] For a systematic account of these cultures reference may be made to Stuart Piggott's *Prehistoric India* (1950), chapter IV.

[3] An account of the explorations in the sites of the Kulli culture is to be found in Aurel Stein's 'An Archaeological Tour in Gedrosia' (*MASI*, No. 43, 1931).

[4] For an account of the Zhob sites and their objects reference may be made to Aurel Stein's 'An Archaeological Tour in Waziristan and Northern Baluchistan' (*MASI*, No. 37, 1929).

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[6] Stuart Piggott, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[7] A voluminous literature dealing with the various aspects of this civilisation is available. The following standard works may be consulted with profit:

(i) John Marshall (ed.), *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilisation* (1931), 3 vols.
(ii) E.J.H. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro* (1937), 2 vols.
(iii) M.S. Vats, *Excavations at Harappa* (1940), 2 vols.
(iv) E.J.H. Mackay, *Chanhu-daro Excavations, 1935-36* (1943).
(v) E.J.H. Mackay, *Indus Civilisation* (1936); second edition (1948) under the title *Early Indus Civilisations.*
(vi) N.G. Majumdar, 'Explorations in Sind' (*MASI*, No. 48, 1934).
(vii) Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India* (1950).
(viii) R. Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilisation.*

[8] Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India* (1963), pp. 255-56.

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[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] John Marshall, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 46.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[13] Stuart Piggott, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
[14] John Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
[15] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture* (1934), p. 6.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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2

MAURYAN SCULPTURE

The Harappa civilisation, in spite of its being a literate one, has usually been designated as pre-historic or proto-historic on account of its seal inscriptions remaining still undeciphered. The remarkable uniformity of the material aspects of this civilisation impresses the observer forcefully when he fails to detect any appreciable change in the content of the culture during the many recorded phases of the rebuilding of the city of Mohenjodaro covering a period of nearly a millennium. The civilisation comes into view in a mature form, though behind it lay the peasent cultures of Baluchistan as the explorations at the type site of Harappa have revealed. In this mature form it is found to be essentially Indian with significant parallels in later times. The end of this civilisation remains still enigmatic; there might have been natural and economic causes for its decline, and the suggestion that the Aryan migration might have been ultimately responsible for the final collapse of this civilisation in the Indus valley may have some truth in it.

In view of the significant parallels of the Harappa civilisation, including its art forms and motifs, in the historic period, it would appear surprising that a big hiatus should separate this pre-historic or proto-historic phase of Indian art from the earliest historic phase known to us. This period of hiatus is, however, of immense significance in Indian history and culture. It witnessed the consolidation of the Aryans along with the gradual absorption of the non-Aryan and pre-Aryan elements. The complex pattern of Indian life and thought, in short, of Indian culture, had its foundation on a fruitful collaboration among the various elements and in this process the descendants of the Harappa people apparently played a predominant part. It is more

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than possible that a continuity in artistic practices and traditions was maintained, though the evidences of such a continuity are still to be discovered through proper explorations. It is gratifying to note that the recent archaeological policy of the Government of India tends to that direction. Clay modelling represents extensively an art of the people, and the enormous mass of terracotta figurines, discovered throughout the subcontinent unfortunately without any definite archaeological context, when properly assorted with the evidence of stratigraphy, may possibly help to fill up the gap between the pre-historic or proto-historic and the historic phases of Indian art history.

Indian history assumes a more or less continuous character with the sixth century BC which saw great ferments in the intellectual and political life of India. The rise of Jainism and Buddhism introduced new ideas that were soon to take deep roots in the Indian soil, the latter destined to extend beyond her boundaries in various directions. Almost simultaneously, one may trace the growth of sectarian cults that underlay Hinduism of the later days. In the process of transmutation, consequent to Aryan impact in Indian setting, many of the old beliefs and practices came to the fore, adapted, however, in Aryan garb. Politically, the period marked the emergence of bigger states out of the tribal political organisations of the earlier times. Inspired by ideals of universal suzerainty these states began a contest for empire building which ultimatly culminated in the establishment of the political hegemony of Magadha over practically the whole of India. The coming of the Mauryas represents a definite landmark in Indian hissory. They fulfilled the aspirations and ideals of their predecessors on the Magadhan throne by unifying the greater part of India under one sceptre and by establishing a strong and centralised administration. The avalanche of foregin aggressions was swept away and further menace to it successfully checked. A spirit of self-consciousness and self-reliance was the result. With the expanding of the horizon of political vision the intellectual outlook was correspondingly widened, and it is not surprising that Aśoka could dream of a new world order based on non-violence and universal well-being. The new outlook, political, intellectual and psychological, proved to be of immense significance for the development of the formative arts of the country. It is not surprising that the earliest known phase of historic Indian sculpture begins with the Mauryas.

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Leaving aside the wealth of materials of the Indus civilisations, no artistic remains, that can be definitely ascribed to the pre-Maurya epoch, have survived. This is not to mean that there was no art. Literature of the early age is replete with references to artistic practices, including that of the plastic arts. The materials used were, however, of a perishable nature, such as wood, clay, ivory, etc. and such materials sufficed to meet the needs of the then social conditions and the religious beliefs and practices. No remains are extant, however; the hot and humid climate of the country was apparently responsible for their disappearance. It is only terracotta, or burnt clay, that is expected to survive, and a stratigraphic allocation of the abundant mass of terracotta objects, usually found in ancient sites, may help one to determine the course of Indian sculpture from the end of the Harappa period to the coming of the Mauryas.

With the advent of the Mauryas and consequent new outlook on life and culture stone came to be increasingly employed as the medium par excellence for sculptural expression in India, and with this change one reaches a sure ground from which to start the investigation into condition of the plastic arts of the country during the historic period. But the fact remains that though stone as a medium of plastic expression was new, it was handled with such perfect skill and efficiency as to presuppose a long anterior practice in stone-cutting. The few stone sculptures of the Harappa civilisation indicate, no doubt, the existence of such a tradition in days long gone by. One has to remember, however, that the Harappa sculptors used a softer kind of material, such as limestone, steatite and alabastar, and the artistic practice and tradition in stone, of which we have any knowledge in the earlier epoch, cannot, by themselves, explain the mastery with which stone of huge and heavy dimensions was handled by the Mauryan artists, and this is a fact that still remains a mystery.

The theory that the use of the harder and more permanent medium of stone was due to foreign inspiration and that works were carried out under the tutelage of foreign masters, if not by foreign artists themselves, may not be entirely outside the range of probability. It is a well known fact that the first three Mauryan emperors, Chandragupta, Vindusāra and Aśoka, maintained friendly relations with the Hellenistic West, particularly with the court of the Seleucid kings who may be described as successors of Alexander the Great and

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of the Achaemenids of Iran as well. This may indicate the source of extraneous inspiration, if there be any; it is to be noted that an adaptation of the achaemenid models has been recognised in the Edicts of Aśoka, and also, possibly, in the remains of the Mauryan palace in the imperial city of Pāṭaliputra.

The objects of art definitely belonging to the Mauryan period are the columns, popularly known as the *lāṭs* bearing the inscriptions of Aśoka. They are tall, tapering monoliths of polished sandstone with sculptured capitals, rising to an average height of about 40 feet from the base to the summit. They stand isolated in sacred sites as self-contained units in open space. Unrelated to any larger architectural composition and for the mature and distinct quality of their unique plastic conception, as evidenced in their richly decorated capitals, these *lāṭs* should preferably be included within the scope of sculpture, rather than of architecture.

A fair number of such *lāṭs* have been discovered, some in perfect state, others in fragmentary condition. A clear idea of the form and composition of an Aśokan *lāṭ* may be had from the one standing at Lauriya Nandangarh in North Bihar.* These *lāṭs* are fashioned out of grey Chunar sandstone and stand directly on the ground without any masonry platform or base, having been kept in position by being simply buried in the ground, sometimes fixed to a socket hole in the middle of a large undressed block of stone. The shafts, plain and circular in section, have each a slight taper upwards. Each is chiselled out of a single block of stone, the capital surmounting it being of another piece and fixed to the top of the shaft by means of a copper dowel. The capital is divided into three sections, namely a double-curved inverted lotus (commonly known as the 'Persepolitan bell': Agrawala[1] recognises in this motif an inverted *pūrṇa-ghaṭa*) surmounted by an abacus or socle that supports an animal sculpture or sculptures in the round. The entire column with the capital is distinguished by a precision of modelling and bears on the finished surface a highly lustrous polish the composition of which is still a matter for investigation. Several mouldings of variable designs are usually introduced to render the transition from the shaft to the capital easy and graceful.

*Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 8; S.K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture* (1st ed.), fig. 23.

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These columns or *lāṭs*, though alike in general form and composition, vary in the treatment of detail, particularly in that of the capitals. In this connection it may not be out of place to refer to the possibility that some of these pillars might have been standing from before the days of Aśoka. This is suggested by the Rupnath and the Sassaram edicts and Pillar edict No. VII where Aśoka says that rescripts of the Law of Piety should be engraved on rocks and on stone pillars (*silāthuva*),[2] wherever such pillars might have been standing. It is not impossible, hence, that the idea of the Edict Pillars was first suggested to Aśoka by some pre-existing pillars which he also thought of utilising in his new mission. Indeed, a close examination of some of these pillars clearly indicates them as having been apart from the more well known Edict Columns. Such is possibly the case with the Basarh-Bakhira pillar. The heavy and stunted dimensions, the rather ill-fitting square abacus on a circular shaft, the apparently crude and clumsy execution of the crowning lion, suggest that it belongs to a more primitive stage in the composition of such pillars when the happy integration between the different components had not yet been achieved. The capital of the column at Sankisa has also an archaic and uncouth appearance on account of the heavy and plump shape of the crowning elephant and its rather rough workmanship. The abacus has changed from the square to the round shape and is decorated with rosettes and honeysuckle in low relief, together with a border ornament at the lower edge which is particularly reminiscent of wooden prototypes. It is significant that the Basarh-Bakhira pillar, at least the portion above ground, bears no inscription. Such is also possibly the case with the columns at Sankisa and Salempur. At the latter place there has been found a fragmentary capital with four addorsed bull figures,[3] which from its brilliant polish may possibly be classed with the same group as those under discussion. This fragment, now in the Patna Museum, was apparently the crowning member of a pillar. Each of these not only has a more archaic look, but also appears to belong to a lower level of artistic conception, when compared to the edict-bearing columns. Their existence, even in the pre-Aśokan days, may not, hence, be beyond the range of possibility.

Again, the animals forming the crowning members of the capitals of the pillars are not particularly associated with Buddhism alone. Lion, either singly or in group of four, appears on the majority of the

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capitals, elephant on the Sankisa, bull at Rampurwa (fig. 11) and in a group of four at Salempur and horse at Rummindei.[4] These four are also represented round the abacus of the quadri-partite capital at Sarnath (fig. 12). Some scholars try to find a specific Buddhist association of these animals: lion means the 'lion of the Śākya clan' (Śākya-siṁha); elephant is associated with the legend of the conception of the Buddha; horse with that of the 'Great Renunciation'; bull to denote the Buddha who was often addressed as *muni-puṅgava* or as *Śākya-puṅgava*. These animals are sacred to Brahmanism and, to a certain extent, to Jainism also. The Lauriya Araraj column, which, in all probability, was crowned by the figure of Garuḍa[5], may be regarded to have a distinct Brahmanical association. In this situation it is difficult to consider these animal capitals in any sectarian context. The view of Agrawala[6] seems to be more convincing. He identifies the lion, the elephant, the bull and the horse as the four 'noble' animals (*mahā ajāneya paśu*) held sacred in Indian tradition for a long time past and for a long time after. Raising of such animal standards must have been common and it is not impossible to regard at least some of the Aśokan pillars as but translations in stone of the primitive animal standards. If we are not sure about the other edict-bearing pillars, the Araraj column is, at least, one instance of a pre-existing stone pillar on which the edicts had been engraved by the orders of Aśoka. The view of Benjamin Rowland[7] trying to explain these animals as heraldic devices derived from the West or as derivations from the memorial columns of the civilisations of ancient Mesopotamia lacks confirmation when viewed from the Indian context.

Aśoka visited Lumbini in the twentieth year of his consecration and apparently the inscription on the Rummindei pillar was engraved that very year. The dates of the other pillar edicts are even later. Irrespective of this information, a sequence of the pillars may, perhaps, be determined by an examination of the style of the capitals. The earliest in the series was apparently the Basarh-Bakhira lion capital, followed by the elephant capital at Sankisa and the capital with four addorsed bulls from Salempur. Agrawala[8] arranges the others in the following order: Rampurwa bull capital (fig. 11); Lauriya Nandangarh lion capital; Rampurwa lion capital;* Sanchi lion capital (quadri-

*1st ed., fig. 24.

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partite); and finally the quadri-partite lion capital at Sarnath (fig. 12). It is to be noted, however, that the differences in style are of a very minor nature and that it is difficult to be sure in this regard. The Sanchi lion capital, again, seems to be separated from its counterpart at Sarnath by a certain distance in time, however short that may be.

The relationship of these edict pillars of Aśoka with those of Achaemenid Iran has often been stressed.[9] The influence of West Asiatic factors in the art and culture of the period cannot be seriously denied in view of the close contact existing at this time between India and other West Asiatic countries. But it is rather difficult to regard the Mauryan pillars merely as imitations, or adaptations, of the Achaemenid proto-types. There are tangible differences between the two in their respective functions, as well as in their conceptions and styles. Unfortunately, such differences have usually been ignored. Not belonging to any architectural composition, the function of the Mauryan pillars is totally different—a difference that is also reflected in their design and form. The Mauryan pillar, unlike the Achaemenid, does not stand on any base, nor does it exhibit the channelling or fluting which is invariably characteristic of the latter. Moreover, the shaft of the Mauryan pillar is, without exception, monolithic; the Achaemenian invariably composed of separate segments of stone aggregated one above the other. Again, in technique, the Mauryan pillar partakes the character of wood-carver's or carpenter's work, the Achaemenian, that of a mason. Finally, the design as well as the shape of the capitals are different, due, no doubt, to the new conception of the Mauryan pillars as standing free in space. The supposed resemblance of the so-called 'bell' in the Indian pillar with that of the Persepolitan is merely superficial. It should be remembered also that the member, with which analogy is drawn, usually appears in the Achaemenid column at the base and not as the capital, as in the Indian pillar. The double curves of the Indian member surmounted by animal sculptures in the round exemplify rather a new order of capital which is distinctive of India alone. This lotiform member, representing either an inverted lotus or a *pūrṇa-ghaṭa*, is entirely in accord with Indian tradition and it would be futile not to recognise its Indian origin. The real affinities with the West are recognised in the use of such decorative motifs as the honey-suckle, the acanthus, the 'knop and flower' pattern, etc. But in view of the

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wide divergences in form, design and conception, a borrowing from the Achaemenian pillar design cannot truly explain the Indo-Iranian affinities. India had long been a part of the West Asiatic culture complex and the key to the problem lies, as Coomaraswamy observes, in "inheritance of common artistic traditions."[10] Standing independently, the Indian pillars produce an independent effect, simple and harmonious in design, with a feeling of vigour and dignity that remind one of "fresh and elemental strength."[11]

The animal figures in the round surmounting the capitals have also come in for much discussion. Their modelling, approaching, to a certain extent, a vivid realism and fine finish, has led scholars to regard them as the handiworks of the Hellenistic or Perso-Hellenistic masters. Animal standards have long been well known in India and the possibility of the edict pillars being derived from the primitive animal standards has already been pointed out. Some of these pillars might also have been standing from before the days of Aśoka. The animal figures on the capitals of Mauryan columns exhibit the same indigenous quality of naturalism and volume as has been recognised in the animal figures on the Indus seals. The outstanding examples of such crowning animals are supplied by the celebrated quadripartite lion capital from Sarnath (fig. 12), the lion capitals from Lauriya Nandangarh and Rampurwa, and the bull capital from Rampurwa (fig. 11). The Rampurwa bull provides a striking similarity with the figures of that animal on the Indus seals, in form as well as in its modelling, in its quality of naturalism and nervous tension suggested through pent-up volumes following closely the anatomical details. The graceful poise of the animal is striking and reveals the mastery of the artist responsible for the work. The round abacus is carved all around with such patterns as the honey-suckle, the acanthus and rosettes in quite an individual manner. Compared with this bull figure, the lion figures on the other capitals are more stylised, though an approach to realism is suggested through the intense muscles and the swelling up veins. The Rampurwa capital has a single lion,* seated on its haunches, on a round abacus that shows a frieze of ducks in low relief all around. The pose is conventional, though not without grace, and similar lion figures may be seen over the capitals

*Ist ed., fig. 24.

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of the columns at Basarh-Bakhira and at Lauriya Nandangarh. The lion figure over the Basarh-Bakhira pillar, it has already been observed, is on a lower level of artistic conception. In spite of a realistic approach and more precise modelling in the lion figures from Rampurwa and Lauriya Nandangarh that leads to an impression of vigour and dynamic strength, the schematic treatment of the manes indicates that stylisation is on the increase. Of these two figures, again, the Rampurwa lion exhibits a more powerful modelling and a more advanced feeling for form. Agrawala is inclined to consider the Rampurwa lion to be "perhaps even better than the Sarnath lions."[12]

The Sarnath quadri-partite (fig. 12) is, by far, the most well known of all these animal capitals. Consisting of the usual sections the four lions, placed back to back on the abacus, originally supported a wheel, fragments of which have been recovered at the site. The entire capital with its different elements has a very subtle symbology, admirably elucidated by Agrawala,[13] and is now the official emblem of India.

Except for the more erect attitudes, necessitated by the demands of composition, the treatment of the lions in this quadri-partite is similar to that of the single figures from Rampurwa and Lauriya Nandangarh. The abacus, however, shows an original innovation in having four animals carved in high relief– an elephant, a horse, a bull and a lion—separated from one another by the representations of wheel. The freshness and spirited naturalism of these animal figures on the abacus (the four 'noble' animals as Agrawala describes them) are rather in strong contrast to the more conventional and stylised treatment of the lions above. However much one may attribute the latter, on account of the execution of the muscles or the treatment of the muzzles and the paws to Persepolis, the 'flexible naturalism' which permeates the animals on the abacus and, to a certain extent, every form in the entire capital is Indian in spirit and breathes, so to say, the tender sympathy for the animal kind which was inculcated by the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* (non-violence) preached by the Master and propagated by Aśoka. A general indebtedness to Achaemenid forms is not impossible, though not likely; if there had been any, in Indian hands and in Indian atmosphere the dryness and aridity of the Persian tradition became softened and imbued with a new fulness of life and form. It is difficult to subscribe to Marshall's view of an Achae-

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menid inspiration in Mauryan art. Yet, his comment on the Sarnath capital may be quoted as perhaps the most penetrating analysis of this splendid piece:

The Sarnath capital, he says., "though by no means a masterpiece, is the product of the most developed art of which the world was cognizant in the 3rd century BC, the handiwork of one who had generations of artistic effort and experience behind him. The masterful strength of the crowning lions with their swollen veins and tense muscular development and in the spirited realism of the reliefs below, there is no trace whatever of the limitations of primitive art. So far as naturalism was his aim, the sculptor has modelled the figures direct from nature, and has delineated their form with bold faithful touch; but he has done more than this, he has consciously and of set purpose infused a tectonic conventional spirit into the four lions, so as to bring them into harmony with the architectural character of the monument. Equally mature is the technique of his relief work. In early Greek sculpture it was the practice to compress the relief between two fixed planes, the original frontal plane of the statue and the plane of the background. In the reliefs of the Sarnath capital there is no trace, whatever, of this process; each and every part of the animal is modelled according to its actual depth without reference to an ideal front plane, with the result that it presents the appearance almost of a figure in the round which has been cut in half and then applied to the background of the abacus."[14]

The Sanchi quadri-partite, though similar to the Sarnath one, except for a frieze of pecking geese round the abacus, is much inferior in execution and may belong to a date later than that of the Sarnath capital.

Another animal sculpture, belonging to the age of Aśoka, is also of outstanding importance. It represents the fore-part of an elephant* carved in the rock at Dhauli, near Bhuvaneśvara (Orissa), over the edicts of Aśoka, including the two specially meant for Kaliṅga. In the modelling and execution of this elephant figure one may recognise a note and feeling different from those manifested in the animal figures surmounting the pillar capitals. It represents a fine delinea-

*A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig 11; 1st ed., fig. 21.

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tion of bulky volume and living flesh, natural to that animal, along with a dignified movement and linear rhythm that have no parallel, except in a feeble manner in the elephant figure in relief on the abacus of the Sarnath capital. At Kalsi (Dehradun district, Uttar Pradesh), over the edicts, appears the engraving of an elephant, labelled as *gajatame*, which is also characterised by the same kind of rhythm. Aesthetically, the Dhauli elephant is superior to the animal figures on the capitals, though it may be less advanced tectonically. The only sculpture of the capital group that nearly approaches it in artistic conception and experience is the bull on the Rampurwa capital which also, like it, exhibits a remarkable plastic sense for form and volume along with a quiet dynamism, in strong contrast to the stylised presentation of the lion figures. There can be no doubt that an aesthetic vision and tradition, unburdened by anything extraneous, were at work in these remarkable animal studies. This performance on the part of an Indian sculptor appears to belie, again, the view of an extraneous inspiration in Mauryan art.

A few massive sculptures, wholly in the round, representing *Yakshas* and *Yakshiṇīs*, are also tentatively ascribed to the Mauryan period of account of the existence on their surface of a smooth polish resembling that on the edict columns themselves. These figures, however, present a conception that is wholly unlike that of the edict columns or their animal capitals. The two groups are sharply distinguished from each other and scholars try to explain this distinction—one as representing the archaic indigenous tradition associated with the Indus valley remains,[15] and the other as a more sophisticated and eclectic tradition inspired by the court. The explanation, particularly the one with reference to the *Yaksha* and *Yakshiṇī* group, seems to be rather weak and does not appear to be convincing at all. Moreover, among the *Yaksha* and *Yakshiṇī* figures themselves there may be recognised wide disparities as regards their technique, style and aesthetic expressions. In view of these sharp divergences, which are too tangible to be ignored, it is difficult to place all of them together in one stylistic or chronological phase, much less in the Mauryan epoch. A treatment of them should properly be reserved, hence, for a later section in conformity with their chronological and stylistic positions.

The ancient sites of Pāṭaliputra, Mathurā, etc. have yielded numerous terracotta figurines some of which may be referred to the

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Mauryan epoch. With the greater use of stone for plastic expression, terracotta art, even in spite of its graceful contributions, is relegated into the background in relation to the monumental works in stone. Terracotta art, slight and tiny though in scale, presents us with a variety of significant forms and motifs and deserves a separate treatment.

Whatever the origins and affinities, the plastic style exemplified by the edict pillars and their sculptured capitals represents an art that was inspired and fostered by the court. Like all court arts, it was, to a certain extent, eclectic with very little emphasis on this or that individual tradition. The eclectic character of this art does not necessarily mean that it was extraneous in inspiration. The imperial will of the great Aśoka brought it into being and it served his purpose admirably as a vehicle of his policy of *dhammavijaya*. It does not appear to have any deeper root in the collective will of the people, though the character was undoubtedly Indian. It has been observed that in spite of its superior tectonic quality, Mauryan art has only a 'marginal importance[16] in the history of Indian plastic arts and that like the columns themselves this art stands isolated from, and unrelated to, what one understands as the formal structure of Indian sculpture. Mauryan court art was concerned chiefly with animal sculptures and it has to be specially stressed that the feeling for naturalistic form and volume together with a quiet dynamism that characterises the Rampurwa bull or the Dhauli elephant remained the basic quality of Indian sculpture throughout its active course.

NOTES

[1] V. S. Agrawala, *Indian Art* (1965), pp. 99-100.

[2] E. Hultzsch, Inscriptions of Aśoka *(Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. I, 1929), pp. 166-167, 170-171.

[3] *ASR. Eastern Circle*, 1912-13, p. 45.

[4] T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India.* This statement is also supported by a passage in the inscription on the Rummindei pillar.

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[5] R. P. Chanda, Beginnings of Art in Eastern India *(MASI*, no. 30), p. 23.

[6] V. S. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 100.

[7] Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India*, pp. 43-44.

[8] V. S. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98.

[9] In the past many scholars, mostly Western, had written on this problem. Whatever identity or affinity they noticed between the two seems to have been unduly exaggerated thereby leading to the view of a foreign origin of Mauryan art. The chief sources of inspiration, according to them, were Achaemenid Iran and Hellenised Western Asia. Some scholars even go so far as to suggest the importation of artists from these centres for the execution of these works. The most recent exponent of this view is Benjamin Rowland, though he concedes that "the ideas that these foreign shapes were intended to express are completely Indian" (Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45).

[10] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* p. 17.

[11] L. Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture* (1929), Vol. I, p. 5.

[12] V. S. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

[13] V. S. Agrawala, *Chakradhvaja or the Wheel Flag of India*, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-03.

[14] John Marshall in *CHI*, Vol. I, pp. 562-63 (reprint).

[15] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 10.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

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3

POST-MAURYAN SCULPTURE

The Mauryan dynasty, already in a process of dismemberment after Aśoka, finally succumbed to a *coup de grace* led by Pushyamitra, a general of the Mauryan army, about 185-84 BC. A new dynasty, that of the Śuṅgas, came to wield the political power which gradually waned after Pushyamitra and disintegration of the empire soon followed. The Kāṇvas are said to have succeeded the Śuṅgas and continued to rule till about 28-27 BC. New states arose on the ruins of the once mighty empire, both in the north as well as in the south. The Yavanas from Bactria who towards the close of the Mauryan rule are known to have carried their arms as far as the metropolitan city of Pāṭaliputra established their political hegemony in the north-west which witnessed successive intrusions of foreign peoples in later times. The last two centuries of the pre-Christian epoch presented, in these respects, an unhappy political spectacle with the imperial ideal and unity laid to dust. Nevertheless, the period was not without a certain significance in the cultural sphere. The peoples coming from outside were soon absorbed and an integrated social structure came into being.

This period is also an epoch of great artistic achievements. Freed from the overpowering influence of the court, art reaches a larger section of the people and artistic activities became wide-spread. As a result of Aśoka's patronage and his missionary activities the religion of the Buddha had extended far and wide and the zeal for the new religion found expression, in the period immediately following that of the Mauryas, in remarkable artistic achievements distributed throughout the country. Such achievements represent an indigenous artistic movement—a continuation of the ancient heritage of Indus valley

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art, enriched further by the contributions of the various ethnic elements that began to make themselves felt in the complex fabric of Indian civilisation and history. As in other aspects of life and culture, it is not possible to distinguish separately each and every ethnic contribution. The indigenous structure was also but slightly disturbed, and the different alien trends practically grew into it. The ancient indigenous heritage, as Kramrisch admirably puts it, "was to withstand, by assimilating, while transforming, whatever racial influx touched upon it."[1]

In the history of Indian art the ancient period, as represented by the plastic remains of the peasant and urban communities of western India, has rendered form in terms of volume. The ancient substratum of earth-bound volume feels a new experience when the solid mass unfolds its vitality with the help of other factors, mainly linear rhythm. This consists of a gliding linear movement up and down along the surface, and the pliable form acquires a new balance and the integration thereby. This fluid rendering of volume extends also to depth and endows the figures with an animation, dynamic as well as compact. This coordination between solid volume and its gliding linear movement constitutes the plasticity which is an essential element of classical Indian art. This classical quality is confined not only to sculpture, but is also equally evident in painting. At first its approach was rather faltering and uneasy, but soon coordination and balance were achieved. The new factor made itself felt by about 200 BC and it took a few centuries to reach a complete and successful integration of the two. This period marks, hence, a creative and formative epoch in the history of Indian art.

The artistic movement in the early classical phase was widespread through the country, having important centres of activity, both in the north as well as in the south. In the north the main activity is recognised in Madhyadeśa at Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi, Mathurā, etc. In the east there was a regional movement in Kaliṅga in present-day Orissa. Apart from intense activities at these places, artistic remains unearthed in other parts of Northern India mark a wide and expansive movement representing the development of a common plastic tradition with the same inherent and fundamental qualities. Local and regional idioms may be recognised, but in spite of such differences in idioms and expressions all are linked up as parts

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of the same general movement, the classical movement.[2]

The beginnings of the classical movement may be traced from about the end of the Maurya period. A fragmentary relief, dug up from among the ruins of Sarnath from a level referred to about the closing years of the Mauryas, is an instructive example in this regard. Part of an architectural composition, it shows a female figure with the head bent down over the gathered up knees and hands, an attitude that indicates extreme dejection.* The heaviness of the coiffure, the dress, the girdle and the anklets, all crudely executed, and the stiffness of the cylindrical legs mark an archaic and inexperienced technique to which the sweeping curve of the woman's back in profile stands in significant contrast. Equally significant is the delicate modelling of the pulsating female form. It is this linear expressiveness that endows the form with a plastic coherence, in spite of the unequal treatment of each single part. The coordination between the outline and the modelled surface, the touch-stone of the classical quality, is already there, though rather faltering in accent.

The sculpture of this phase consists mostly of relief carvings on the stone railings and gateways of stūpas and is concerned with the depiction of stories and legends of Buddhism. Certain problems connected with the narration of the story, the third dimension, the optical perspective, etc. faced the artists. These the early Indian sculptors solved in their own way and according to their own beliefs and ideas. In this manner were evolved certain devices and formulae that do not always follow the notions and standards recognised in the West.

Serving as a vehicle of communication according to the needs of an expanding religion, the art in this early period is mainly narrative, following the ancient practice of continuous narration. The detailed manner of depicting a particular story or event leads to the presentation of the various incidents and episodes of it in one and the same relief composition. The figure of the main actor is repeatedly shown to indicate the progress of the story, and the basis of connectedness is usually the locality in which the event or the story is said to have occurred. Irrespective of the time that might have separated the

*Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 11; S. K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture* (1st ed.), fig. 34.

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various incidents, they are grouped together into one synthetic unit, because they all took place at one and the same spot. The chronological sequence is thus intentionally broken up in favour of a narration that centres round the location of a story or an event. Time factor is thus regarded as of no import in this convention and is eliminated altogether. For the artist, the immovable locality is something tangible, and the fact that several incidents happened at the same place may thus be considered as a link that subsists between the visualisation of the story in the mind of the artist and its delineation with the help of a relief composition. This uni-local, i.e. topographical, method of presentation is specifically Indian and may be recognised to be the most logical method of continuous narration with its pivot on something that is solid and not intangible and invisible as the time element (fig. 13).*

The problem of the third dimension was also tackled by the early Indian sculptors in their own peculiar way. The forms are conceived not in terms of depth, but in those of surface. In the relief, hence, the figures are presented above, and not behind, each other, with the result that what according to the laws of optical perspective ought to have been hidden, partly or entirely, is shown in entirety or only partly covered (fig. 14). Again, the objects are large or small, not according to their nearness or distance as the optical impression would demand, but in accordance with the functional importance of each object. The visibility of the objects is also similarly determined, irrespective of the perceiving eye. Whatever exists is a reality with the Indian artist, and not what the eyes see. And so he arranges his composition according to the demands of the story he delineates, regulating the size and visibility of the forms, not with the idea of being optically correct, but of being functionally consistent. On account of these conventions, rational according to the logic of the Indian artists, the flat reliefs look like trays packed with all kinds of forms (fig. 15). Oversecting and foreshortening are resorted to sometimes lending the objects singly a three-dimensional treatment; but such treatment never extends to depth so far as the entire composition is concerned.

*Cf. also the Bharhut medallion describing the story of the purchase of Jetavana by Anāthapiṇḍaka and its gift to the Buddha: Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 16.

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(i) Sanchi: Stūpa II. Bharhut

Of the artistic remains of the early classical phase in Madhyadeśa the reliefs on the ground balustrade of Stūpa no. II at Sanchi come first in stylistic consideration. The carvings consist of decorated medallions on the uprights in the interior and large rectangular panels over the entire surface of the posts flanking the entrances. On the medallions occur single figures or motifs within decorative setting. In the rectangular panels appear figure subjects, either singly or in pairs, in verticle rows (fig. 16). Executed in very low flat relief, the panels look almost like linear patterns, merely sketched, without any differentiation of planes. In spite of a remarkable sense of decorative design, better adapted to such a purpose, the execution of the human form, packed in an unexpected fertility of vegetation, is primitive in technique, every form, whether figural or vegetal, being cut very low and at right angles to the flat background. In some of the panels the angular treatment of the human figures ill suits the vegetal scheme of composition with its heaving and flowing curves. Occasionally, there may be noticed an approach to modelling by rounded contours. But still the figures are without any animation. The main theme of the composition is the flowing linear rhythm of the plant, the creeper and vegetation, and it is not without reason that Coomaraswamy describes such reliefs as belonging to the 'plant style.'[3] A more advanced treatment may, however, be recognised in a group of reliefs on the balustrade of the same stūpa. The group exhibits a greater knowledge of form, of spatial relations, and of animated and graceful poses and movements. This stylistic advance has been attributed to contacts with extraneous art traditions, but is more probably to be explained as the natural consequence of the growing consciousness of the artists working in an atmosphere of an active and progressive art movement.

The reliefs on the ground balustrade of Stūpa no. II at Sanchi have been described to be archaic and formalistic and the modelling seems to have been subdued by the linear scheme. The next phase of the movement is supplied by the reliefs on the gateways and balustrade of the stūpa at Bharhut (Central India) where one witnesses a greater ease in attitudes and movements and a larger expansiveness in modelling. The bulk of the remnants of the railing (fig. 17) and gate-

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ways has been set up in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, while stray sculptures and reliefs have found their way to a number of Indian, European and American collections. From an inscription on the surviving eastern gateway[4] it is known to have been erected by Dhanabhūti during the reign of the Śuṅgas (*Suganam raje*). The gate and the railing were erected simultaneously, as is evident from an inscription on a rail bearing name of prince Vadha Pāla, son of Dhanabhūti.[5] Carvings appear on the uprights, the *toraṇa* pillars and architraves, the cross bars and on coping stone, literally on every available space of the extensive composition. They are usually accompanied by descriptive labels that give the titles of the subjects depicted. On the gateway pillars and on the uprights flanking the entrances there are representations of the *yakshas*, the *yakshiṇīs* and other semi-divine beings, while on the uprights the reliefs depict the *Jātaka* stories and scenes from the life of the Buddha. Such narrative panels are oblong, square, round or half-round according to the architectonic needs. Each cross bar bears a decorative medallion, while the coping stone (fig. 15) usually shows a wavy and flowing creeper design that meanders along the length binding together the various reliefs dispersed over the surface within the wavy curves. The individual figures within a composition are also likewise recognised to be related to one another by a gliding linear rhythm. In the scenes of the previous lives *(Jātakas)* of the Master, the Bodhisattva, as he was then called, is represented in human form according to the needs of the stories; but in those of his historical life he is never represented as such. His presence, when the occasion demands, is indicated by symbols, such as the Bodhi tree, the Vajrāsana, the parasol *(chhatta, chhatra)*, the footprints, the Wheel *(Dhammachakka, Dharmachakra)*, the Stūpa, etc. The inscriptions clearly testify that such symbols actually stand for the Master. Early Indian art was essentially aniconic.

The reliefs, whether of large-size figures or of small ones within a composition, may be found to vary in quality and technique. Yet, all are linked together by certain common characteristics. As already observed, an advance on the plastic diction of the previous phase may be noticed at Bharhut in the relatively greater ease in attitude of the figures and in the conscious attempt towards rounded and mellifluous contours. But, in spite of a greater ease and variety in the composition, one may recognise the same aversion to depth, the surface and

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volumes being, more or less, flatly conceived. The large-size figures of *yakshas* and *yakshiṇīs* on the uprights reveal two kinds of modelled shapes, seemingly isolated from each other. Figures of Sirimā *devatā*,* Kubera,† etc. look almost like silhouettes sharply detached from the background, in which a rigid frontality and a juxtaposition of modelled shapes one above the other confront the spectator. An effort toward modelling is made entirely by grading the planes of the reliefs in severe and distinctive layers ("an inane superposition of massive forms" as Kramrisch describes it)[6] and then rounding off the contours. Apparently such figures fail to attain the effect of an organic whole. A peculiar abstraction is, again, recognised in the treatment of the feet, or of the hands in an attitude of adoration, which, irrespective of anatomical accuracy, are turned sideways and presented in their broadest aspect. To these silhouette-like figures the ample curves and flows and variegated attitudes of such figures as Sudarśanā *yakshī* (fig. 18), Chulakokā *devātā*, Chandā *yakshi* (fig. 19), etc. offer a significant contrast. An idea of rhythmic movement is imparted by the alternation of thrusts of the arms and the legs. There is a greater coordination of the masses forming the body and there is noticed a faint attempt at a gliding transition from one mass to the other. Marshall explains this distinction—one as the uninformed work of the indigenous craftsmen and the other as the result of an influence exerted by foreign artists.[7] In spite of the apparent contrast, however, there is an underlying and unmistakable link that binds the two; and this is manifest in the conscious attempt to relate the three-dimensional extensiveness to the surface, and not to depth, and the harsh contours to the swaying grace and plastic consistency suitable to the gentle and mellifluous curves of the vegetal scheme which is the chief compositional theme of early Indian art. One may trace this effort from the low and flat reliefs on the ground balustrade of Stūpa no. II at Sanchi to the large-size *yaksha* and *yakshiṇī* figures of both the groups at Bharhut in almost undisturbed sequence. Further identities between the groups that bind them together may be recognised in the same types of apparel, jewellery and hair treat-

*Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 26.

†A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 38; Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 14 B.

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ment. Again, as Benjamin Rowland observes, "the representation of the human figure is in every case conceptual rather than realistic. In the portrayal of the yakshīs there is an emphasis on the attributes of fertility in the swelling breasts and ample pelvis."[8] Such concepts and qualities characterise both the groups. When all these aspects are considered there is no reason to separate the two groups and explain them as deriving from two different traditions. Here at Bharhut we recognise a conscious and progressive art movement, indigenous in technique, attitude as well as in spirit, the fundamental idea of which is to endow the human form the same flowing movement as that of the vegetal scroll.

A flowing linear rhythm, although hesitating in accent sometimes, constitute the main theme of composition whether of the single figures or of the figures in a group in a descriptive panel. Within a given composition this rhythm glides from one form to the other and appears to bind, somewhat loosely though, all isolated objects into one unified whole. On the coping stone the lotus creeper meanders along the length in endless waves linking the illustrative panels into one continuous pattern (fig. 15). Each single figure and composition, together with the entire pattern, become animated thereby. A rhythmical movement, permeating all through, integrates and balances every object and composition into one unified organism.

Another trend, a subsidiary one, is also evident in the art of Bharhut. A few of the panels, quadrangular in shape, emphasise closely packed compositions with schematic rows of harsh figures parallel to the lines of the frame. Not swayed by the gentle and mellifluous curves, characteristic of the majority of the reliefs, the figures are, more or less, static in character, disturbed only by sharp passages of lights and shades. This idiom is best illustrated in the so-called Ajātaśatru pillar,* in some of the frameless figures on the upright posts, and also, to a certain extent, in the panel of the Nāga king Erāpata on the Prasenajit pillar.† This apparent disregard for swaying rhythm and balanced coordination, which constitute the dominant plastic diction of the period, may appear to be intriguing. It is possible that the craftsmen who were responsible for these reliefs

*Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 22.
†*Ibid.*, fig. 17 ; 1st ed., fig. 26.

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were not yet fully aware of the scope and vitality of the balanced rhythm of flowing curves, or of the plastic effect that might be achieved thereby. Whatever the explanation, the idiom plays only a small and subordinate part in the art of Bharhut. A fluid linear rhythm, although sometimes faltering in accent, remains the keynote of the Bharhut style.

Bharhut represents an early and archaic phase in classical Indian sculpture. Compared to the reliefs on the ground balustrade of Sanchi Stūpa no. II, the plastic style of Bharhut seems to signify a great advance. Not only is there a far greater precision of carving, but the depth of the relief has also increased appreciably. The relief, however, is flattened and contained within two planes, the front and the back, and the contours of the forms are cut at right angles to the background. There is, at the same time, a conscious attempt to integrate the forms by a smooth and gliding linearism and to relate them with one another. In spite, however, of the relation that exists among the different forms within a composition, the single figures, the main actors of the stories, appear to be unaware of the parts that they were intended to play in the scenes, and are, hence, without any expression. They simply exist, and by mere existence they fulfil the needs of the stories depicted. It is because of this, perhaps, that Bharhut art has been described as modest and restrained in general tone. But this modesty or restraint, whatever we may call it, cannot be said to be deliberately conscious, either on the part of the artists or of the actors of the scenes. In spite of this apparent drawback, the stories are told with exhaustive clearness, and perhaps with a certain amount of directness and naivete; no single details, pertinent to the stories, are left out. Added to these, the descriptive labels leave no doubt regarding the identification of the scenes. Indeed, the artists were so much engrossed with details that nothing escaped them, be it the tattoo mark on a person, the ornamentation of a door-frame, the pattern of caparison or upholstery, or the fine veins of a leaf. The meticulous care with which the details are exhaustively worked out has almost a disturbing effect, and it is only with difficulty that an impression of the whole can be obtained.

(ii) Bodhgayā

Important documents of early classical sculpture are supplied

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by the carvings on the remnants of the quadrangular stone railing enclosing the ancient Bodhi shrine at Bodhgayā. At Bodhgayā the Master attained his enlightenment (*sambodhi*) and the place was held in great veneration by the Buddhists from the earliest days. Aśoka is known to have made a pilgrimage to the place in the twentieth year of his consecration and tradition records that he built a Bodhi temple on the spot. This shrine, however, no longer exists; but an idea of it may perhaps be obtained from its representation on a Bharhut relief.* It appears to have been an open pavilion enclosed by a railing with the Buddha's diamond throne (*vajrāsana*) in the centre with the Bodhi tree behind. The shrine had been reconstructed many times in succession till the erection of the present Mahābodhi temple the foundation of which may go back to the seventh century AD.

The fragments of the railing, now extant, fall into two groups, one early and the other late. The early series again is posterior to the period of Aśoka by approximately a century and a half; the later series cannot be dated prior to the early centuries of the Christian era. Here we are concerned with the early series. In this series among the names of the donors appear those of Kuraṁgī, wife of king Indrāgnimitra, and Nāgadevā, wife of king Brahmamitra[9], possibly minor chieftains who may be assigned to the first half of the first century BC. The palaeography of the inscriptions and the plastic style of the carvings tend to support this chronology.

The carvings on the Bodhgayā rail follow the same pattern as those of Bharhut. On the whole, they are in the Bharhut style, but more advanced in technique as well as in visual and, consequently, plastic effect. What strikes one at first sight is that the narrative reliefs are divested of all unnecessary details, only the indispensable and essential elements being retained to convey the full import of the stories depicted. A comparison of the same theme—that of the purchase of Jetavana by the merchant Anāthapiṇḍaka for gift to the Master—at Bharhut and Bodhgayā† will bring out this point clearly. Instead of being scrupulously exhaustive, as at Bharhut, the Bodhgayā

*A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 41; 1st ed., fig. 30.

†Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, figs. 16 and 19.

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version is more suggestive and aesthetically more appealing. At the same time the rendering of the story is much more subtle. This abbreviated form of narration results in less crowded compositions in which the figures move more freely and with greater ease and clarity. On account of a more organic modelling with softer contours and subtler and more harmonious integration of the different parts, the body acquires a rhythm, perceptible not only along the surface, but extending also into the depth. The figure of Indra as Śānti* occuring on an upright of the Bodhgayā rail may be referred to in this context. It is carved in high relief which, with the oblique cut along the contours, seems to step out from the background. In spite of the frontal aspect in which the figure is presented, there is a suggestion of easy and graceful movement, while the smooth and suave integration of the various parts lends to the body a significant articulation. The figure of a *yakshiṇī,* climbing a tree, on another upright has a much fuller and rounder modelling, an intensely articulated body and a sensuous definition that seems to anticipate future developments. In three-dimensional extensiveness again, the Bodhgayā composition is more advanced than that at Bharhut and results in an easier movement of the planes and more harmonious spatial relations. The relief of the sun-god Sūrya in his four-horsed chariot† is a typical instance of the manipulation of space by the Bodhgayā artists. Inseparably linked with the Bharhut tradition, the art of Bodhgayā represents a convincing advance on the previous achievements. For the first time the composition begins to vibrate with a charming vitality and the body to pulsate with soft, warm flesh. Orderliness, clarity and closer organic relations take the place of the unsteady medley of forms and motifs that characterised the Bharhut style.

(iii) Sanchi: Gateways of the Great Stūpa

At Sanchi and its neighbourhood is situated the most extensive series of early Buddhist monuments. As many as sixty stūpas are known to have been erected within this circumscribed area and they are now collectively known as the Bhilsa Topes. The work started

*Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 19 B; A.K. Coomara swamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 40; 1st ed., fig. 31.

†A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 61; 1s ed., fig. 33.

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during the period of Aśoka and continued at Sanchi for a period of more than one thousand years. On the hill-top at Sanchi may be seen a number of interesting monuments, stūpas, temples, monasteries, etc., and during the Gupta period the entire complex came to be known as Kākanādaḅoṭa *vihāra*.

Of the monuments at Sanchi the most conspicuous are the three Stūpas, nos. I, II and III, which still seem to retain, more or less, an idea of their pristine form and grandeur. Stūpa no. I, also known as the Great Stūpa (*Mahā Chetiya*), is the largest of the three and has an imposing form with its massive ground balustrade and four majestic gateways on the four cardinal faces. Stūpas nos. II and III are smaller in size. In the last were enshrined the relics of two of the chief disciples of the Buddha, Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāyana. Stūpa no. II has only a ground balustrade of stone enclosing the structure and reference has already been made in an earlier section to its carvings which, technically as well as stylistically, were anterior to those of Bharhut. Stūpa no. III has only a single gateway on the south and a stone balustrade around much of which has now disappeared.

The foundation of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi goes back to the days of Aśoka. The Aśokan Stūpa consisted of a simple brick structure, possibly within a palisade of wood. This brick structure was encased in stone, perhaps a century later, increasing its dimensions to nearly double of the original. It was at this time possibly that a ground balustrade of stone was added to replace the original wooden palisade. Still later, were added the four majestic gateways (*toraṇas*) on the four cardinal faces. The gateways and the balustrade are of the same technique and design as those at Bharhut; though carvings appear only on the gateways; the balustrade was left severely plain.

All the four gateways are of the same design and each extends a little from the line of the balustrade. Tectonic and, to some extent, stylistic considerations indicate, however, that they were not all put up at one and the same time. The first to be erected was the southern gateway fronting the stairway leading to the terraced berm of the stūpa. On this gateway appears an inscription which offers a clue as to the date of its construction. One of the architraves of this gateway owed its origin to the munificence of one Ānaṁda who describes himself as the overseer of the artisans of king Śrī Sātakarṇi.[10]

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This Sātakarṇi has evidently to be identified with Sātakarṇi, son of Simuka the founder of the Sātavāhana family of the Deccan. Sātakarṇi was the third ruler of this family who flourished in the last quarter of the first century BC. The southern gate was followed by the northern, (fig. 20) the eastern and the western in succession, and this sequence seems to be established by tectonic experiments towards a more harmonious and balanced design of the gateway form. There are evidences, however, that no great time intervened between the erection of the first and that of the last of these gateways—the southern and the western. This is evident from the name of a patron, Balamitra a pupil of Ayachūḍa, which occurs both on the southern and the western gates.[11] All the gateways thus appear to have been put up within a generation, so to say, in the last quarter of the first century BC.

These gateways supply in their carvings a wonderful panorama of contemporary life and civilisation portrayed with greart vigour and dramatic intensity. In spite of the limitation of space, the splendid decorative sense of the artists with their simple and easy story-telling diction, graphic in content as well as in the manner of representation, remains unequalled in early Indian art.

The carvings on the gateways, on the whole, belong to the same genre as Bharhut art and mark a significant advance on the latter. One notices here the same manner of continuous narration based on topography, the same mode of presenting the objects dispersed in the composition without any apparent relation to correct perspective, etc. Of course, at Sanchi these conventional modes are seen in their more refined and elaborated expressions. The Sanchi artists were also familiar with the main Bharhut diction of flowing linear rhythm. As observed before, this diction seems to govern the composition of the majority of the Bharhut reliefs. In spite of the direction, the Bharhut artists failed, however, to interpret it with an appreciable measure of success, though there can be no doubt that their main endeavour was to achieve this end. Bodhgayā records significant advances in this direction in a perfectly normal and logical sequence of evolution. At Sanchi, as some of the reliefs and a few single sculptures illustrate, this diction or idiom reaches its fruition in a graceful lyricism of mellifluous contours. A steady movement from Bharhut to Sanchi makes this possible.

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The Sanchi artists seem to have been more concerned principally with another trend or idiom which, again, cannot be understood without reference to the earlier plastic achievement at Bharhut. The strenuous effort of about a century and a half has enabled the artist to master the problems of depth and dimensions and to regulate the contours; and with this new awareness and its scope he visualises his themes and subjects in a manner that is quite different from the main Bharhut trend. Of this manner, again, we have a few archaic attempts at Bharhut, for instance, on the Ajātaśatru pillar *(ante.* p. 41*)*. The horizontal and vertical arrangement of the composition, as one sees on this pillar, completely unfolds its possibilities in the *toraṇa* carvings of the Great Stūpa and leads to variegated and almost bewildering compositions, rich and dramatic in character and epic in quality. The movement is no longer confined to the harsh and schematic treatment of the preceding epoch, but boldly traverses the composition diagonally and in intersecting planes. With increased depth of the relief and greater freedom of movement, the forms are presented at various angles and multitudinous attitudes and poses (figs. 21 & 22). No longer are the forms and figures conceived singly as separate units in the composition; several of them are grouped together in well-defined space. In the relief the group now serves as the pivot of the composition, all such groups in a given composition being organically related to one another.

The result of all these developments is a dynamic expansiveness which extends not only along the surface but extends also to depth. The forms burst forth from the stone, so to say, and spread over the surface almost in endless masses reverberating the entire composition, and illumined by dark passages of darkness. The forms and details of setting are deeply cut and they appear "to swim against a dark background of shadow" as patterns "in black and white completely and instantaneously legible in the glare of the Indian sun."[12] Indeed, the "emphasis is entirely on the delineation of the various elements of the composition in terms of shadows reinforcing the outlines."[13] The dark shadows endow greater relief to the forms and accentuate their vigorous onrush over the composition in bewildering and tumultuous variety. The chiaroscuro, *i.e.* the rich interplay of lights and shades, and the strong feeling for volume, coupled with clear-cut outlines and multitudinous angles, attitudes and poses, act and react

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upon one another and produce vital and dramatic compositions surging with life and energy almost to the point of boisterous frenzy. The scenes of the exciting struggle, such as the War of the Relics (south gate and west gate), best illustrate the epic quality of the Sanchi compositions. In both the scenes the compositions reverberate with vigorous actions and movements, and differ only in dramatic intensity. In the more peaceful scenes the artists were able to portray successfully the easy, free and, occasionally, frolicsome character of the actors, their buoyancy and joy of existence.

At Sanchi the distinctive trend that had its beginnings in the horizontal and vertical arrangement of the figures in a composition, first noticed on the Ajātaśatru pillar at Bharhut, reaches its supreme expression and ultimate fruition. Some of the reliefs, however, adhere to the harsh and schematic treatment of the older version, for instance, the relief of the Worship of the Bodhi Tree on a *toraṇa* post.* Perhaps, they were the works of artists less alive to the creative urge felt in the majority of the Sanchi reliefs. The dynamic energy that bursts forth in diagonal and intersecting arrangements, in highlights and deep shadows, is found to be absent in the panels executed in the earlier version of the idiom (figs. 14, 23 & 24), though the qualities in respect of modelling and sense of volume are the same.

The human figures remain squat and sturdy. In the single figures, though not so much in the figures in a group composition, the reserved contours gradually get softened and flow harmoniously from the shoulders to the ankles (fig. 25). The body now appears as a beautiful and integrated union of the single parts, the fluid contours with their gliding sinuousness leading to a well-constituted and organic whole, no longer shy, hesitating and faltering, but sure and lively in movement, in short, wonderfully articulated plastically. Reference may be made in this regard to the guardian figures on the gateway posts and such *yaksha* figures on the *toraṇa* architraves as have survived. With the masterly rendering of the volumes the sturdy body in each case denotes collective strength. With an idea of pent-up energy the figures now stand firm and stretch their limbs freely and surely.

The masterly execution of figure sculpture at Sanchi is most

*A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 55; 1st ed., fig. 40.

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impressively illustrated in the *yakshiṇī* dryads on the outcarved branches of trees that serve as spandrels, or more appropriately as brackets, between the uprights and lowest architraves of each gateway. Few of these have survived now, some *in situ,* others recovered from the site. The intention of the motif was apparently structural, *i.e.* to serve as a strut for the support of the projecting outer end of the lowermost architrave. This structural intention led to the formulation of a device which, as a motif, turned out to be the least functional, but intensely symbolic and dramatic in effect. These dryad figures, with the full curves and flowing contours of the charming female form, appear to swing overhead with easy grace and agility (compare the dryad figure in position on the east gate fig. 26). Conceived in the round, their bodies seem to vibrate with a dynamic vitality. The structural appropriateness of the motif is suggested by the thrust of one of the legs against the upright and the hand clasping the branches appearing to support the architrave above. But in spite of this appropriateness which underlies the intention, the real import of the motif lies in its symbolical meaning—the age-old Indian belief of a tree quickening and blossoming at the touch of a young girl—and the felicity with which the youthful female form has been rendered. The entire form is articulate in a high degree, as may be seen in a fragmentary figure of a dryad which once formed part of the south gate of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi and is now preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (U.S.A.) (fig. 27). With regard to this figure Rowland observes as follows:[14] "The effectiveness . . . does not, in comparison with the Bharhut yakshī, depend on any closer imitation of a natural model, but on the sculptor's more successful realization of form within essentially the same conceptual framework. The advance is not within the direction of naturalism, but in the more plastic articulation of the body itself and the dynamic vitalization of the form. We have here an even more notable connotation of the quality of flesh in stone achieved by the essential shapes and interlockings of smooth convex surfaces that suggest, rather than describe, the softness and warmth of a fleshly body. The suggestion of flesh and the swelling roundness of form is denoted further by the constricting tightness of the belt and by the contrast of the straight and angular tubular limbs with swelling convexities of bust and pelvis. A sense of vitality is communicated by the tense twisting

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of the torso on its axis. In the frankness of their erotic statement the Sanchi yakshīs are a perfect illustration of the union of the spiritual and sensual metaphor that runs like a thread through all religious art in India."

In Sanchi art animal and nature have been delineated with an understanding and awareness of their respective functions in the compositions, despite the conventional modes in the treatment of some of the natural objects and disregard for perspective. Animal and birds have been rendered with great care and truthfulness. As in the earlier phases, there is a number of mythical animal motifs and vegetal patterns which Rowland collectively describes as 'conglomerate West Asiatic forms' ; these may be explained, not as direct borrowals, but as inheritances from a common and extensive artistic tradition (*ante.* p. 28).

At Sanchi early Indian classical sculpture reaches a distinctive achievement and expression which may be recognised also in the carvings of the single gateway of Stūpa no. III. Beginning from the silhouette-like carvings on the ground balustrade of Sanchi Stūpa no. II it is a consistent growth till the apogee of the direction is reached in the dramatic and dynamic compositions on the gateways of the Great Stūpa. The technique was apparently a derivation from that of wood-carving or ivory-carving, or of both. The setting of the reliefs, *i.e.* the balustrades, the gateways, etc., bears unmistakable impress of the wooden technique, apparently a reminder of a wooden phase in Indian art in the earlier epochs. In this context it would be useful to refer to an inscription on the west gateway which describes the reliefs to be the works of the ivory-carvers of Vidiśā.[15] Kramrisch collectively describes this art as representing the school of Madhyadeśa.[16] Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathurā (which has also yielded a few sculptures of this phase) fall within the boundaries of Madhyadeśa, as defined in the traditional texts according to which the eastern limit of Madhyadeśa was Prayāga (Allahabad), Bodhgayā, Patna, Sarnath (in the latter two places have been discovered a few isolated sculptures of this phase) fall outside Madhyadeśa according to this definition. But the art of the period, as exemplified in these places, belonged evidently to the main stream of the Madhyadeśa school. It has to be noted further that according to the Buddhist tradition the whole of present-day Bihar was included within Madhyadeśa.

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The art of this early classical phase is principally Buddhist. The themes usually represented are the stories and legends of the past and present lives of the Master; the *yakshas*, the *yakshiṇīs*, the tree-spirits, the *nāgas*, etc., representing the beliefs of the common people and accepted in Buddhism as such. On the gateways of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi, to name only a few, have been represented such epic scenes as the Great Departure (*mahābhinishkramaṇa*), the Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi*) along with the scene of the temptation of Māra, the preaching of the First Sermon (*dharmachakra-pravartana*), the Return to Kapilavāstu, the Miracle of the conversion of the Kāśyapas, etc. Among the *Jātaka* stories may be mentioned that of the six-tusked Elephant which seems to have been a preferred theme. On the outer face of the lowest architrave of the eastern gateway has been delineated Aśoka's visit to the Bodhi Tree and on the southern and western gateways has been depicted the War of the Relics. Without adding to the list further, it may be observed that there is a lack of uniformity in the scheme of illustrations, some pertinent subjects being omitted altogether, some repeated more than once, for instance, the story of the six-tusked Elephant, the War of the Relics, the temptation of Māra, etc. It has to be noted that the work of embellishment was carried out on a co-operative basis by individual private donors each of whom might have dictated the theme that he preferred for the space allotted to him. This may explain the disparity and lack of any unified scheme in the selection of themes for adornment of the gateways.

The gateway carvings of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi portray, within a religious garb no doubt, the contemporary life of India in all its varied forms and existences. The rich and aristocratic life at the court, the busy and exciting life in the city, the homely and modest country-life, and the varied luxuriance of jungle-life, have all been treated faithfully and exhaustively. Nowhere are there any signs of unnaturalness and the actions expressed are intensely sincere and dramatic. Though there was a glow of religious impulse behind, the authors of these reliefs were men of the world and it is the worldly life and material existence in their manifold manifestations that they so eloquently portrayed with the help of the stories of Buddhism in the simplest and most expressive language. The strong sense of simple naturalism and transparent sincerity is a trait characteristic of the

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entire early Indian art. It is an art of the people, free alike from artificiality and idealism, and it is because of this character that it has a wide and universal appeal.

(iv) Mathurā

Mathurā has been the home of one of the most important and significant artistic movements with an abundant output especially in the early centuries of the Christian era. It has also supplied examples of plastic art of the earlier phase, stray but meaningful, and the beginnings of the school, associated with the name of Mathurā, may be traced back to the pre-christian epoch, the activity being affiliated to what has been described as the Madhyadeśa school. The early examples of Mathurā art are found to be inspired by the same artistic impulse that characterised the productions of the main school and to have many things in common with them. A few such early sculptures may now be found in the Mathurā Museum. The two fragmentary figures of *yakshas* with their hard lines, flattened treatment, exaggeratedly large and protruding eyes, and heaviness of dress and ornaments, represent an art that is, perhaps, slightly maturer than the Bharhut style, but less advanced than the easier and more refined conceptions at Bodhgayā. The two *toraṇa* architraves indicate technical as well as stylistic advance in the increased depth of the relief, less heavy appearance and a happier grouping of the figures in the composition. The figure of a dryad, modelled almost in the round and serving as a support of an architrave from Kankali Tila, anticipates the charming dryad figures of the Sanchi *toraṇas*. The movement at Mathurā in this early period is related to the Madhyadeśa school and runs parallel to it. With these significant early achievements it bursts forth in superb magnificence in the subsequent periods.

(v) Orissan Cave Reliefs: Udayagiri and Khaṇḍagiri

The two adjoining hills of Udayagiri and Khaṇḍagiri, near Bhuvaneśvara (Orissa), contain a number of caves, all Jaina in affiliation; a few of these have sculptured friezes and panels decorating the walls and facades. The approximate period of these excavations, some of them merely natural caverns shaped in front, may be ascertained from an inscription of Khāravela, king of Kaliṅga, in the

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Hāthigumphā and that of his chief queen (*agramahishī*) in the Mañchapurī nearby.[17] Khāravela flourished about the second half of the first century BC. These two caves, and possibly a few others, were excavated during the period of Khāravela. But all the caves do not seem to have been produced at one and the same time and the activities in the two hills, apart from the mediaeval excavations in the Khaṇḍagiri, were carried on for about a century, the latest in the series possibly dating towards the close of the first century BC or the beginning of the Christian era.

The coarse nature of the rock in which the caves have been dug did not allow fine and clear-cut workmanship and the sculptural works appear, hence, to be cruder and clumsier when compared to contemporary works elsewhere. Carvings in the different caves present, again, fairly wide divergences, but belong mainly to the school of Madhyadeśa, as represented by Bharhut, Bodhgayā, Sanchi and Mathurā. In spite of this dependence on the main Madhyadeśa stream they may be found to have a certain individual character too. The reliefs in the Mañchapurī cave* indicate an advance on the Bharhut idiom in the depth of the relief and the plastic treatment of the figures; the workmanship, however, is poorer and coarser. With the masses modelled in high relief with strong contrasts of lights and shades, there is a suggestion of vigorous action and intense vitality which appear to link these reliefs with the trend noticed in the gateway carvings of the Great Stūpa at Ṣanchi. But technical insufficiency, coupled possibly with the unhomogenous nature of the rock, results in isolated and compact figures which prevent convincing compositions. The carvings in the Ananta gumphā,† Khaṇḍagiri, stylistically and iconographically, are reminiscent of the Bodhgayā reliefs. The two-storeyed cave, the Rāṇī gumphā, is the best decorated of all with elaborate friezes of sculptures, both in the upper and lower storeys, as well as a few independent figure sculptures. Among the subjects depicted two have been identified respectively with the story of Dushyanta and Śakuntalā and that of Udayana and Vāsavadattā, the latter being repeated in the Gaṇeśa gumphā.[18] In spite of the differences in quality that one may discern in the reliefs of the two storeys, there is noticed an advancement on the

*Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 37.
†1st ed., fig. 36.

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earlier achievements, both in technique as well as in style. The compositions, at least those in the upper storey, are more vital and better regulated, and the conception of a theme and its presentation more balanced and harmonious (fig. 28). The execution, however, remains comparatively coarse and lacks the clear-cut finish of the contemporary works of the Madhyadeśa school. Nevertheless, the reliefs represent a mature tradition dependent mainly on the art of Madhyadeśa. With signs of deterioration already manifest in the reliefs of the Gaṇeśa gumphā, the movement loses itself in the coarse and conglomerated works in the Jayā Vijayā and the Alakāpurī caves.

Kramrisch[19] recognises a contact of the Orissan movement of this phase with the South Indian idiom of Jaggayyapeta in the 'utmost economy of relief' of a pillar figure that appears among a number of stray fragmentary objects recovered from Bhuvaneśvara. In view of the familiarity of Orissa with the Madhyadeśa tradition, it is, perhaps, more reasonable to explain this figure as a survival of the archaic idiom noticed in the reliefs of the ground balustrade of Stūpa no. II at Sanchi.

(vi) Yaksha and Yakshiṇī Statues

Several massive and colossal sculptures, carved completely in the round, have come up from widely apart regions of north India. Independent and free-standing, they represent both male and female forms and are distinguished by robust sturdiness together with an emphasis on the features symbolising fertility and motherhood in the female figures. The extensive distribution of the sculptures would at once suggest that the culture and belief that they stood for were at one time widely current over practically the whole of northern India. The attempt to find in some of these sculptures the portrait statues of a few Magadhan rulers of pre-Mauryan epoch lacks support and the view that they represent *Yaksha* and *Yakshiṇī* figures finds confirmation in the inscriptions that appear on some of them. Indian literature is replete with information about a number of *Yakshas*, along with other divinities of folk origin, who were held in veneration by a section of the Indian people, and the Bharhut labels help us in identifying some of them in their iconic forms.

A few such sculptures of *yakshas* and *yakshiṇīs*, together with two nude torsos of Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras from Lohanipur (Bihar), have been

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tentatively assigned to the Mauryan period because of the remnants on their surface of a smooth polish which resembled that on the edict columns of Aśoka and their sculptured capitals. This ascription, however, fails to take due note of the differences that exist among these two groups of sculptures, namely the sculptured capitals and the independent free-standing statues under discussion. The explanation that the latter group represents an indigenous folk tradition as against the official art of Aśoka does not appear to be convincing either, in view of the wide divergences that exist among these sculptures as regards their technique, style and aesthetic expressions. The divergences are too tangible to be ignored and become clear and explicit when they are placed side by side, particularly the *yaksha* figure from Parkham (fig. 29) and that of the *Yakshiṇī* from Didarganj* (fig. 31), the former in its massive burliness and flattened treatment without any coordination of the parts, and the latter in its smooth, rounded and naturalistic features plastically integrated and articulated into a complete whole and inspired by the fluid linearism of the mature classical tradition. They represent practically two extreme plastic conceptions and the other figures of the group indicate different degrees of expressions between these two. A re-study of these sculptures on these considerations is necessary, hence, in order to ascertain their chronological and stylistic positions. It may be pointed out at the outset that the material and the polish, which again is not Mauryan in quality, cannot be regarded as sure and sufficient grounds for assigning these sculptures to one particular period when they differ materially in technical aptitudes as well as in plastic and aesthetic conceptions.

In this reassessment the two *yaksha* figures from Baroda and Parkham, both in Mathurā district, should come first. Of the Baroda† sculpture only the upper part remains, while the Parkham figure (fig. 29) is complete and more or less well preserved except for slight abrasions of the surface. From the inscription which it bears the Parkham figure may be identified as the image of *yāksha* Maṇibhadra.[20] We have here a clear expression of massive portliness and

*A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 17; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 25; Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 24; 1st ed., fig. 47.

†A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 15.

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volume which may be found to be the essential qualities also of the other sculptures of the group. It is strictly frontal in treatment and though conceived in the round, it would not be wrong to say that the modelling suffers from inadequate or insufficient technique; the masses appear to be superposed one above the other without any conscious organic relation among them. The sides and the back have practically no modelling except for a slight chamfering. What we have here is an archaic stolidity which, again, is not convincingly expressed on account of a lack of harmony and coordination in the composition. The drapery appears transparent where it clings to the body and has been given flat volume where it is free. The plait in between the two legs is interesting and reminds one of similar plaits in Bharhut statuary.

The burliness and sheer volume, though crudely expressed, connect these figures with the ancient indigenous tradition and gradually this primitive quality experiences the trends and fashions of what has been described as classical Indian art. In the two *yaksha* figures from Patna (fig. 30), almost identical in form and conception, and in the *yakshiṇī* figure from Besnagar* we recognise the same archaic heaviness; but the treatment and modelling appear to be easier and freer. In the front, each of the figures exhibits more rounded features including the arms, the bust and the abdomen. The linear contours at the sides are less harsh and have smoother movement. The drapery is given separate volume where it does not cling to the body and indicated merely by parallel ridges where it does. In spite of the general heaviness of the forms, the more rounded features and the attempt at freer linear contours leading to an effect of a partial articulation of the body in each case, separate these figures from the Parkham image (fig. 29).

The two nude torsos, apparently Jaina in affiliation, from Lohanipur, near Patna, are analogous to the Patna *yaksha* figures; but the heaviness gives place to a stiff and flattened modelling in which the fully rounded features are equally in evidence.

The image of *yaksha* Maṇibhadra from Pawaya (Gwalior)†, though usually classed with the Parkham figure, exhibits a greater

*A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 8; 1st ed., fig. 43.

†1st ed., figs. 46 & 48.

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sense of modelling, front and back both included. It is a well balanced production and the artist appears to have overcome the conflict between rounded forms and flattened surface which is clearly immanent in the other figures discussed above. A greater coordination of volumes, one naturally flowing into the other, definitely shows a mature conception in which one may feel, as it were, the soft, warm flesh. There is nothing primitive or archaic in this figure except its heaviness; but heaviness is a quality inherent in this class of sculptures and of early Indian art as well, and its most potent characteristic.

Equally free from primitiveness is the *yakshiṇī* figure from Didarganj;* near Patna, which stands out as the most outstanding creation in the whole series. The massive body (fig. 31) is fully modelled in the round, the sides and the back also not excepted. The full and rounded features, including the prominent breasts, the narrow waist, the broad hips gradually tapering down to the shapely legs, are all kept within the compactness of the whole and within a fluid linear contour that one may recognise in the rendering of the front, the back and the sides. The plastic treatment of the whole gives a dynamic character and articulation to the entire form, further emphasised by the easy and slight stoop and forward movement of the upper part of the body and by a delicate bend of the right knee-joint. No longer is there any sign of clash between rounded masses and flat surface; the masses coalesce and converge into one another in a free and fluid linear movement, and seen from whatever angle the composition is one of sweeping curves that accentuate and give relief to the volumes and masses. In the sensitive rendering of the warm and lively flesh, in the treatment of the hair, of the drapery and of the ornaments, and lastly in its graceful stance we have here a female pattern, urban and sophisticated and classical in its idea and content.

The extremely flattened treatment of the Parkham *yaksha* (fig. 29) with its inane superposition of volume after volume compressed between two surfaces, the front and the back, is allied to, and perhaps more primitive than, the relief statuary on the Bharhut *toraṇas* of the second century BC. The other figures are allied to it, though gradually they

*A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesion Art*, fig. 17; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 25; Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 24; 1st ed., fig. 47.

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begin to feel the impress of the trends and idioms of the contemporary art movement as recognised in the school of Madhyadeśa. The portly statues of *yakshas* from Patna (fig. 30), conscientious in the rendering of earth-bound weight, but with greater roundness of features and less harsh linear treatment, are found to be essentially identical with the *yaksha* figures crowning the *toraṇa* architraves of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi, dated about the close of the first century BC. In the rendering of these colossal statues, no doubt representatives of the old plastic diction of weight and volume, one may recognise the extension of two-dimensional treatment to three-dimensional depth, as evident in the contemporary movement of Madhyadeśa. The old indigenous plastic diction appears to be inspired by the classical idiom of fluid and sensitive lines, and in the Didarganj *yakshiṇī* (fig. 31) one may find a successful integration of the two dictions, the old and the new. With its fully rounded form and fluid lines, in the lively and sensitive modelling of the limbs and the almost sensuous touch of the soft, warm flesh, the physiognomical type is not far removed from that of the dainty *yakshiṇī* forms (fig. 38) on the Mathurā rails. It is not without justification that Rowland[21] compares the Didarganj figure with the intensely articulated dryad figures of the Sanchi *toraṇaas*. From the static weight of congested flesh, joined in a conglomerating manner between two flat surfaces, the front and the back, the form has freed itself to three-dimensional extensiveness, and though heavy and stolid, a subtle and sensitive rendering and a dynamic movement may be found to characterise the entire composition.

(vii) Western India

Artistic pursuits during this early period were not confined to northern India alone. Parallel activities may also be recognised south of the Vindhyas, and such activities, though broadly connected with the Madhyadeśa movement, have certain qualities that endow each with a local and regional flavour. In western India there started early a long-continued movement in rock-cut excavations and a series of *vihāra* and *chaitya* caves furnishes us with a succession of interesting materials for a study of the evolution of architectural and plastic forms. The caves at Bhaja, near Poona, represent the oldest of the series and here in one of the *vihāra* caves one may find interesting reliefs going back to the second century BC. These carvings in

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their powerful naturalism and treatment of costumes and other accessories recall the Bharhut tradition indicating a style allied to that of Madhyadeśa. But the movement here has a different character and expression, as is evident in the two well known reliefs at the eastern end of the verandah of the *vihāra*. They appear on either side of a doorway and seem to represent, as has been suggested, Sūrya and Indra, the former driving in a four-horsed chariot across the sky and the latter striding on his elephant, Airāvata, over a wide landscape.[22] Sūrya* is accompanied on the chariot by two attendants and an escort of riders on horseback, while the quadriga is driven over two grotesque female figures appropriately described as amorphous powers of darkness. Indra† is accompanied by a male attendant who sits behind and carries a standard, and the mightly elephant, which by its enormous bulk blots out a greater part of the landscape, has in its upturned trunk an uprooted tree that adds to the vehemence of the scene depicted. Within the landscape appear other interesting details equally vehement in expression. The compositions rise directly from the surface of the wall and are not bounded by any kind of frame.

The main interest of these reliefs lies in their heavy and bulging forms that seem to have emerged from the matter of the rock itself due to a pressure from within. Coomaraswamy rightly recognises in the Bhaja relief "a quality of volume and expansion, quite distinct from plastic modelling",[23] and it is due to this quality that the compositions appear to brook no limit and extend as far as their inner urge carries them and the surface of the rock allows. Some scholars describe this as an aboriginal quality characteristic of rock carvings and later manifestations of this trend may be recognised in other rock-cut carvings.

A far closer analogy with the Madhyadeśa school may be seen in certain detached sculptures that hail from western Indian cave sites. One of the most eminent in this group is a robust and sturdy dwarfish figure,‡ shown in an attitude of carrying something over the

*A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesion Art*, fig. 24; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 39; Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 18A; Ist ed., fig. 49.

†A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 27; Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 18B.

‡V.S. Agrawala, *Indian Art*, fig. 118a.

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head that has been recently found at Pitalkhora, near Aurangabad. The figure appears to be pressed down by the weight of the object that it was intended to carry. The full import of this figure may be understood by comparison with almost identical figures that serve as capitals of the *toraṇa* posts of the western gateway of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi. On this analogy the Pitalkhora figure seems to belong also to about the same date. It supplies a motif which is rather common in early Indian art and Agrawala identifies it as *kiṅkara* or *guhyaka* of Indian literature.[24]

(viii) South India: Veṅgī and Guḍimallam

Simultaneously with the movement in western India, the Kṛishṇā-Godāvarī delta, roughly the Veṅgī region in the south, also experienced an awakening of artistic impulse. The initial products of this Southern movement hail from Jaggayyapeta, thirty miles to the north-west of Amarāvatī which eventually came to be an important centre of activity. The site of Jaggayyapeta has for a long time been used as a stone quarry and only a few fragments of relief carvings are now extant. Yet, they are of high interest as illustrating in a marked manner the fundamental character of the southern movement. Distinguished by an extremely low and flattened relief, the carvings seem to be attached to the surface almost like linear sketches.* In this respect they are, to a certain extent, akin to the reliefs on the ground balustrade of Stūpa no. II at Sanchi with the only difference that at Jaggayyapeta one may recognise a greater precision of carving and sensitiveness of modelling, in spite of a flattened treatment of the relief. Another characteristic is furnished by the attenuated and elongated forms of the figures. The bodies themselves, despite their "unearthly slenderness",[25] are, however, as sturdily built as those of Madhyadeśa and are inspired by the same sense of plasticity. The preference for slimness and elongation of limbs, along with a precision of outline, appears to be characteristic of this Southern movement, and this local idiom is manifested, in a more telling manner, in the later phases. Early Amarāvatī work of the first cen-

*A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, figs. 142 & 143; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 38; Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 16A.

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tury BC† carries on this tradition. The reliefs are slightly deeper cut with a tendency towards a more forceful modelling. The bodies, in spite of being tall and slim, remain a bit tough, later on destined to be transformed into the most pliable and voluptuous forms.

Further south, the Śiva-liṅga at Guḍimallam (near Renigunta, North Arcot district) has a certain unique appearance. It is a realistic representation of phallus with the anthropomorphic figure of Śiva standing on a crouching *yaksha* carved in its lower section.* The sculpture has been assigned to the first century BC, a date that appears to be correct stylistically. The sturdy and vigorous body is confined within a decisive outline and can hardly be related to the Veṅgī tradition, or possibly to that of Madhyadeśa of this period. The firm and resolute tread, as shown by the forceful attitude, seems to press down the *yaksha* underneath. Kramrisch connects it with an aspect of ancient Indian tradition that has not survived.[26]

This initial phase of early Indian sculpture closes roughly with the close of the pre-Christian epoch. Artistic activities during this early period are found to have been wide-spread and, in spite of local and regional idioms, a stylistic connectedness appears to have been immanent among the various movements, however distanced in space they were. In this early phase were laid the foundations of those basic qualities that were to reach their fullest expressions in the succeeding centuries.

†A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, figs. 144-46.

*A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 66; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 36; 1st ed., fig. 42.

NOTES

[1] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 127.

[2] Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, p. 51, also describes Indian art of the last two centuries of the pre-Christian millennium as 'Early Classic'

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and observes that "Indian 'Early Classic' art retains the vigour and directness of archaic, as it prophesies the sophistication and ripeness of the final development of Indian art."

[3] Stella Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

[4] *Indian Antiquary*, 1892, p. 227; *JRAS*, 1918, p. 138.

[5] A. Cunningham, *Stupa of Bharhut*, no. 54. The close similarity of the letters of the Bharhut inscriptions, donative as well as descriptive, with those of the Aśokan edicts would suggest that they were not far removed from the period of Aśoka. These works at Bharhut may reasonably be assigned, hence, to the early part of the Śuṅga rule, probably between 185-84 and 150 BC.

[6] Stella Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[7] John Marshall in *CHI*, Vol. I, p. 567 (reprint).

[8] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[9] *ASR*, 1908-09, p. 147.

[10] *Ibid*, 1913-14, pp. 41 f; John Marshall, *Guide to Sanchi* (2nd ed.), p. 52; H. Luders, List of Brahmi Inscriptions, *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. X, No. 346.

[11] John Marshall, *Guide to Sanchi* (2nd ed.), pp. 40, 50 & 79.

[12] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

[15] John Marshall, *Guide to Sanchi* (2nd ed.), p. 52.

[16] Stella Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[17] D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, pp. 206-11, 213-14.

[18] V.S. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-81.

[19] Stella Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

[20] V.S. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

[21] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[22] The reliefs have been differently interpreted by E.H. Johnston in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. VII, 1939, pp. 1-7 and V.S. Agrawala in *op. cit.*, pp. 191-92.

[23] A.K. Coomarswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 27.

[24] V.S. Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

[25] Stella Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

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4

ŚAKA, KUSHĀṆA AND ĀNDHRA

The early phase in classical Indian art, as outlined above, represents a formative stage in which foundations were laid of those trends and tendencies that were to constitute the essential and characteristic qualities of later Indian sculpture. The further development of artistic movement covers the early centuries of the Christian era in which the trends and tendencies reach their maturity and become inherent in the structure of Indian plastic art. The artistic activities, fairly wide-spread in the earlier period, become, however, centralised in certain distinct localities, for example particularly at Mathurā in the north and Veṅgī in the south. Apart from these two well defined centres there flourished a school with an abundant output in the north-western part of India and eastern Afghanistan, a school that owed its origin to an extraneous and eclectic art tradition commissioned to serve an Indian religion. In western India the earlier trend of Bhaja continued in the rock-cut caves. Besides, stray finds of sculptures have been recorded from sites both in the north and the south. With these achievements in the early centuries of the Christian era classical Indian art reaches its fruition in the age of the Guptas who established their hegemony over northern India in the fourth century AD.

(i) Mathurā

With the disruption of the Maurya empire north-western part of India was again a prey to foreign aggressions. The Yavanas (Greeks), the Śakas, the Pahlavas, the Kushāṇas etc. entered India, and there began a scramble for power the details of which are rather tiresome and not unoften free from confusion. Some of these peoples advanced far into the interior; but in spite of these constant upheavals, old

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Indian art continued to enjoy an unbroken continuity along the direction, already outlined. There was no break or disturbance and, except for certain minor details of ornamentation and presentation, plastic art developed in the Gangetic valley along the lines already determined in the early classical phase. Mathurā, the converging point of ancient trade routes from different directions, was not only an important and prosperous city in the ancient days; but it also grew up to be a great centre of religious and artistic activity. So abundant was the artistic output that here the history of Indian sculpture can be studied in unbroken sequence from rather early times right up to the mediaeval period. The prestige and reputation of this great art centre spread far and sculptures of Mathurā style and workmanship have been found in widely distant regions. For the history of Indian plastic art few centres are of greater interest and importance than Mathurā.

The early phase of artistic activity at Mathurā, recognised through a few stray and isolated finds, is closely linked up with what we have described as the Madhyadeśa school, as exemplified in the Bharhut and Sanchi reliefs, and have been dealt with in that connection. The great period of Mathurā art begins, however, in the Christian era and its most abundant output synchronised with the rule of the Kushāṇas who had extended their supremacy over substantial portions of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā doab. The number of sculptures, dated with reference to the epoch of the Kushāṇas, is fairly large, nearly 140. The recorded dates are all within the first century of the Kushāṇa epoch. It may be argued, therefore, that the dated sculptures might furnish definite clues to a stylistic sequence within the first hundred years of Kushāṇa rule beginning from the reign of Kanishka I which started, according to one view, in AD 78. Scholars have discussed at length the problem of the dates recorded on these sculptures; there is, however, no unanimity in their views. In many of the dated records the names of the rulers do not appear and in view of certain divergences in style of sculptures with nearly close dates opinions have been expressed that some of these sculptures might belong to periods later than the first century of the Kushāṇa epoch on the assumption of omission of hundred in recording these dates.[1] Style is, however, an elusive factor, so also is palaeography, the evidence of which is also requisitioned in support of such views. It is difficult to

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subscribe to them until and unless more cogent grounds are available. Whatever divergences these scholars find might have been due to personal competence and predilections of the artists concerned, not perhaps to a distance in time.

So far as the indigenous artistic activity is concerned, it is at Mathurā that we first notice the popular use of images of various divinities, and with the creation and introduction of the cult image there is perceptible already a new direction in Indian art. The origin of the cult image in India has been a matter of much controversy which is beyond the scope of this book. In the popular religions of the early Indians a strong anthropomorphic character was immanent. Though subdued as a result of the preponderance of the religion of the Vedic Aryans in the early days of Aryanisation, this tendency received a great impetus on the rise and development of theistic devotional cults which may be considered as an emergence of the popular non-Aryan and pre-Aryan fashions and practices, now recognised, absorbed and systematised in relation to Aryan philosophies. It is at Mathurā that this innate anthropomorphism and iconism asserted with vigour and found expression in images of the divinites of the principal religious systems.

In the new iconography that came into being as a result of the creation and introduation of the image in the religious belief of the people it is the figure of the Buddha that plays a prominent part and conveys the contemporary notions underlying the divine image irrespective of cult association. With the idea of the divine image expressed in terms of human form the artist's conception of the importance of the human figure and its relation to its surroundings necessarily changed. The earlier conception of a relief composition is of very little import to this new iconography in which the chief interest centers round the human figure boldly carved and set against the plain surface of the ground. The earlier concept of continuous narration or of spatial relations is of little use in this art and is excluded altogether. The new direction requires new means of expression and according to the demands new conventions and new techniques were evolved leading to the development of stereotyped image-stela with the ideas of grouping of the central and accessory figures determined by iconographic prescriptions.

The image proper, in its initial stage, is shaped, as it were, in the

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form and content of *yaksha* primitives and, hence, on the older indigenous tradition. Indeed, the earliest Buddha figures, called Bodhisattvas in inscriptions out of deference to old scruples against the figuration of the Master, are intimately related, formally, psychologically and in treatment, to the colossal figures of *yakshas* and *dvārapālas* and, like them, are characterised by massive earthliness and robustness of form and volume. Several images of the Master, dated in the reign of the great Kushāṇa emperor Kanishka, are instructive examples in this connection. One of them hails from Kosam (Kauśāmbī) and was installed in the second year of his reign.[2] From Sarnath[3] (fig. 32) and Saheth Maheth (Śrāvastī)[4] we have two such images, one from each site, both dedicated by friar Bala in the third year of the reign of the same monarch. A second image from Sarnath, closely similar to the above, may also be dated about the same period, though a few scholars ascribe it to a slightly earlier date on account of the folds of the drapery appearing on the upper torso.[5] In the other figures the folds do not appear on this part of the body. All these images are executed in the mottled red sandstone of Sikri and were apparently of Mathurā origin. Each of them represents the Master in a standing pose with the left hand held near the hip and the right, wherever preserved, raised up to the shoulder in *abhaya-mudrā*. A lion is shown on the pedestal between the legs and indicates that the figure portrayed is that of Śākyasiṁha, or the 'Lion of the Śākya people', *i.e.* the historical Gautama Buddha. The head, wherever preserved, is found to be closely shaven and the forehead bears no mark of the *ūrṇā*. The upper part of the body is partially covered, the right shoulder being left free. The drapery, which consists of an upper garment and a lower, clings closely to the body and the folds are shown in schematic lines over the left arm and in the lower part. The under-garment is fastened to the waist by a knotted girdle and the upper is wound round the left shoulder and drawn diagonally across the body, the ends being gathered up over the left lower arm. The hems and the ends of the drapery are given separate volumes. Though carved in the round, each of these sculptures has been conceived in strictly frontal aspect and is static in stance and character. The broad shoulders, the prominent masculine torso, the heavy and massive form firmly planted on the pedestal, the gesture and other features are expressive of enormous energy and mundane force that

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belong to this world, and not to any concept or idea that is beyond it. The open eyes and the smiling countenance also do not suggest any idea of spiritual introspection. In this group of sculptures the image comes into view merely in its physical aspect as that of a world-conqueror; the spiritual form, suggestive of supra-physical divine existence, is, however, yet to come.

The above series of colossal sculptures inaugurates, so to say, the line of Buddhist images, or for the matter of that all cult images, extending down to the Gupta period. They indicate, no doubt, the archaic and indigenous tradition of image-making, already evident in the earlier days in the massive *yaksha* and *yakshiṇī* figures, discussed in the previous chapter, following the movement of the progressive classical idiom. This is clearly noticed in other sculptures of Mathurā workmanship, both standing and seated, (figs. 33, 34, 35) in which there may be recognised a conscious and gradual working towards an expressive contour, a distinct articulation and co-ordination of the different parts and a refined and more effective modelling. Some of these figures have spiral *ushṇīshas* (fig. 35), while *ūrṇā* is sometimes indicated by a raised dot on the forehead between the eyebrows. The halo, whereever preserved, is circular and scalloped at the edge. A few are dated with reference to the reigns of the Kushāṇa kings Huvishka and Vāsudeva and they register the gradual development of the type, chronologically as well as stylistically. In the Katra Bodhisattva* and a few other analogous figures (fig. 35) one finds the beginnings of the image-stelae in which may be recognised the rudiments of group compositions that become conventional and stereotyped in the later images. The heavy and massive form becomes relaxed in course of time, and grows supple and pliable with a gliding linear contour and with smooth and submerged shadows playing all over the surface. But in spite of these developments towards refinement and elegance, the figures remain earth-bound, as in the earlier days, with no suggestion of any spiritual idea or concept. This is true not only of Buddhist sculptures, but also of other cult images, Jaina and Brahmanical. The iconographic details gradually reach their

*A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 84; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 81; S. K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture* (1st ed.), fig. 53; Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 46.

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fulness, but the spiritual grace, the true import of the image of a divine being, is found to be lacking.

The Mathurā artists were aware also of the contemporary Gandhāra art tradition of the North-west and certain Buddha figures and reliefs give indications of this awareness. In several such figures of the Buddha the drapery hanging down in semi-circular folds is found to cover both the shoulders, and in a few, also the feet. The head, again, is not shaven, but covered with curls of hair. Coupled with these, the eyes and the lips are full and sharply cut, the upper eye-lid being especially heavy. These features, unknown in early Indian sculpture and in the Mathurā type of Bodhisattvas, might have been due to contacts with the Gandhāran tradition. More definite evidence of such contacts is provided by certain motifs, such as the woman and the acanthus, the vine with fruits, etc. These are, however, late incidents in the history of the Mathurā school and constitute a very small fraction of the total productions of that school. It is possible that the popularity of the Gandhāra school might have influenced the Mathurā artists on simple grounds of competition. Though apparent, the influence of Gandhāra on Mathurā art appears to be very slight, however. Certain motifs were evidently borrowed, but there is practically no change in technique or style; and whatever influence came from outside was assimilated and drawn into the fabric of Indian plastic tradition according to Indian notions and requirements.

Certain groups of Mathurā sculptures, all dealing with strong drink and inebriation,* have been classed as Bacchanalian, and their interpretation is still a matter of uncertainty, in spite of various discussions. In several sculptures of the group foreign touches are marked in the treatment of the drapery, in attitudes and stances, and in general features of composition, and the view that the motif was inspired by foreign subjects might be possible. Purely Indian parallels of the motif are found in a number of reliefs from Mathurā, "all representing a nude fat man being piled with drink by maidens or supported in a complete state of intoxication".[6] Some are inclined to interpret the motif as the Indian version of the story of Silenus. Benjamin Rowland describes the motif as a portrayal of the paradise of *Yaksha* Kubera,[7] mainly on the ground of corpulence of the man—Kubera is described

* 1st ed., fig. 58.

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as a fat and pot-bellied person in Indian literature which also mentions his strong addiction to drinks. The motif, however, is a new one in indigenous Indian art and might have been inspired by the Dionysian legends of the West. Another alien motif may perhaps be recognised in a pillar relief from Mathurā, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Tentatively described as representing 'Herakles with the Nemean Lion', the motif, it appears, has been derived from Greek classical source. The modelling also reminds one of the same tradition, though Benjamin Rowland recognises in it the wholly "Indian feeling of fleshly warmth and fulness".[8]

The above motifs, including the so-called Bacchanalian scenes, did not form part of the Indian art movement; nor did they survive in subsequent Indian art, in spite of their seeming popularity during this period. They were just passing fancies which might have touched the imagination of the Mathurā artists, and are of very little import to the history of Indian art as a whole.

Mention should be made in regard to Mathurā art of a few large-size portrait statues, discovered from the site of Mat, Mathurā, the ruins of which are presumably believed to be associated with the royal cult. The identification of two of these sculptures is certain because of the inscriptions that they bear. One is described to be the effigy of Kanishka (fig. 36), 'the great king, the King of Kings', and the other that of Śāhi Vema, also having the same epithets, evidently Wema Kadphises who preceded Kanishka. The third has been identified as the statue of Chashṭana, a Śaka satrap of western India, contemporary to the Kushāṇas. This identification, however, is not certain. The three letter inscription has no relation to this name except for the last two letters. Again, the emendation of the first letter to *Cha* for the sake of this identification is not convincing in view of the fact that the name is not preceded by any epithet indicative of the status of the person depicted, as we find in case of the first two sculptures.

The statues of Kanishka and Wema Kadphises introduce a new trend in Indian art, that of portraiture. The idea is possibly a borrowal from the West, from the Classical World in the ultimate analysis. Portraiture has never been a special mark of Indian sculpture and the few portrait sculptures that are known remain idealised and typical with no indication of any individuality required of sculptures of this kind. In this respect the two above-mentioned statues may

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claim more than a passing attention, not only on account of their being the first in the series, but also because they bear the reflection of the personality of the rulers depicted. It is needless to say that they belong to a style and class that stand apart.

The statue of Kanishka (fig. 36) shows the monarch standing firmly on pedestal and represents an extremely linear and angular conception in which the figure, though free, is entirely set into the surface and is frontal in the most rigorous sense of the term. He is dressed in a stiff mantle, and heavy felted boots and his hands grip the mace and the sword in a gesture that betokens authority. The head, unfortunately, is missing. The statue closely follows the portrait figures of Kanishka on his coins and on this basis it is not unreasonable to reconstruct the complete image by supplying a bearded head with a peaked cap. In respect of style, the main effect is one of flat and compressed surface of harsh angles and sharp lines, "a relief disengaged from its background with no suggestion of three-dimensional existence, . . . a stone slab carved into the silhouette of a cloaked figure."[9] Apparently it lacks the ponderous volume of the early Indian tradition as well as the plastic rhythm of the classical. Nevertheless, "no effigy of an Assyrian king or Roman Caesar gives a stronger impression of authority and power as this image of the conqueror from the steppes, an effect conveyed by the arrogant pose and the hieratic, almost idol-like rigidity of the form."[10] In the second statue* Wema Kadphises is seen seated on a lion throne dressed in a tunic and felted boots in a manner that is equally expressive of authority and power. Seated portraits of Kushāṇa rulers are known to appear also on their coins. Though in profile, according to convention in numismatic art, they supply counterparts, in miniature, of this huge colossal sculpture in stone. The style is, in a certain degree, analogous to that of the Kanishka statue, though there may be recognised some rudimentary attempts at modelling of the surface in front. The shoulders, again, are broad and the form is, to a certain extent, full. Despite these, it is difficult to disassociate the Kadphises statue from that of Kanishka. Benjamin Rowland finds in the former some suggestion of the Iranian portrait statues of the Parthian period.[11] At the same time, a Central Asian or

*Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 43.

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Scythian inspiration cannot be entirely ruled out. The Mathurā artists seem to have tried their hands in alien and unfamiliar conceptions; but they do not appear to have succeeded in their new experiments. Hence the alien conceptions remain just merely passing incidences in the history of Mathurā art and of Indian art as well.

To resume the indigenous direction, again. A particular kind of Mathurā sculpture is represented by votive slabs, known as *āyagapaṭṭas*, which were erected in the Jaina shrines for the adoration of the *arhats*. To this class belong also the so-called 'Holi' reliefs. These votive slabs are Indian in conception and treatment, the figures and other features of the composition following the indigenous direction. Particularly interesting is the Āmohinī relief,[12] in all probability pre-Kushāṇa in date, which exhibits all the mass and volume of early Indian art as also its character of relief composition. The *āyagapaṭṭa* from Kankali Tila[13] showing the seated figure of Jina in the centre is a pleasing study of auspicious symbols and motifs treated with a remarkable sense of harmonious and decorative grouping. In the 'Holi' relief, now in the Mathurā Museum, the artist's venture to render perspective is worth noticing. These slabs are Indian in spirit as well as in technique and characterisation and must be classed with the indigenous art movement.

So far again as the Indian art movement is concerned, the rigidity of the physical mass and volume of the earlier epoch softens down later on to an unprecedented elegance in the alto-relievo sculptures on the front sides of the rail pillars from the various sites of Mathurā. At the back sides there occur the narrative relief panels depicting the stories from the legends. Such compositions are really the outgrowth of the archaic indigenous diction characterised by a simplification of the details leading thereby to more convincing and rhythmical treatment of the whole. (fig. 37) On the front of the uprights are carved in very high relief nude or semi-nude female figures—*yakshiṇīs, vṛikshakās* or *apsaras* and such subjects as toilet scenes, etc.—the connotations and implications of which are anything but religious. Related unmistakably to the figures of *yakshiṇīs* and tree-nymphs of Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, etc., formally and iconographically, the Mathurā rail figures (fig. 38) are distinguished by a 'flamboyance and sensuality of expression surpassing anything known in the art of the earlier periods."[14] They have

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attained greater freedom of movement, of gestures and attitudes, along with an increased plasticity and refinement of the physical mass. Benjamin Rowland admirably sums up the achievement of the Mathurā artists in respect of these figures in his following observations[15]: "Not only is there a thoroughly convincing suggestion of solidity of form, but the articulation of body and limbs is achieved with complete mastery and no suggestion of mechanistic joining of individual parts that characterized the work of the archaic schools." All these developments lead to the creation of alluring female forms of which the aim is frankly sensual and suggestively erotic, despite the fact that the idea behind the figures is apparently inspired by and derived from popular religious beliefs in tree-nymphs and dryads connected with vegetative fertility. The contemporary terracotta figurines from the various sites in the Indo-Gangetic plains supply analogies and parallels of such figures in miniature. With their full round breasts and hips, attenuated waists and smooth texture of the warm living flesh, these sculptures emphasise physical charm as their substance and sensuous appeal for their aim, further accentuated by such gestures as an outward thrust of the hip, a slight turn of the head and frankly coquettish countenance. Even in the male figures the smooth and resilient body is not devoid of sensuous charm. Indian art at this period is found to be unreservedly addicted to everything terrestrial and the entire plastic sense is seen to be steeped in the physical. The physical and worldly aspect of art, so clearly emphasised in the Mathurā school, is seen to extend to a violent and boisterous frenzy in the contemporary art of Veṅgī in South India.

The *yakshiṇī* figures on the pillars from Bhūtesar site (Mathurā), now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, exemplify the worldly trend of Mathurā art in a very conspicuous manner. The other such sculptures from Mathurā, follow, more or less, an identical conception. The plastic tradition of Mathurā of the Kushāṇa phase extended over wide regions and sculptures of the Mathurā school have been discovered in different sites of Northern India. One such eminent sculpture is worth noticing because of its outstanding qualities. It comes from Fyzabad (Uttar Pradesh) and is now preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan of Banaras Hindu University. Here we find a lady, consciously in a walking pose, carrying a covered tray in her raised left hand and a water pot in her right which hangs down (fig.

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39). At the back is a pilaster with a capital that supports a highly decorated bowl above. The subject intended to be depicted is difficult to ascertain. Kramrisch describes the figure as a participant in the Eleusinian mysteries.[16] Some would identify the girl simply as a *prasādhikā*. Whatever the subject, here one may recognise a superb mastery of the artist in the rendering of the female form in all its charms, sensuous no doubt, but without the erotic suggestion of the Bhūtesar sculptures. One may find an analogy of this figure in Didarganj *yakshiṇī* (*ante*. p. 57).

The vast repertoire of the Mathurā school may be recognised to be a natural and consistent growth of early Indian art with its foundations on Indian soil and on indigenous trends and traditions of the closing centuries of the pre-Christian epoch. The dominant fact of Indian history of this period is, no doubt, concerned with the various foreign peoples and races who entered India, fought for and gained political power, and were ultimately Indianised and absorbed in the kaleidoscopic current of Indian population. Extraneous influences naturally reached Mathurā, apparently also in her artistic pursuits; but such extraneous contacts remained as mere incidences and the course of the indigenous art movement was in no way disturbed. The prevailing and dominating tradition was Indian and no amount of alien idiom could change its character. Rather, whatever touched upon it was drawn into the basic fabric of Indian art which continued unhampered and Mathurā bequeathed its rich heritage to the development of Indian art in the subsequent centuries.

(ii) Gandhāra

The sculptures of the Gandhāra country, embracing the north-western provinces of the Indian subcontinent and parts of Afghanistan, represent a fundamentally different art and is outside the scope of the natural and consistent growth of the Indian movement dealt with in the preceding pages. The soil upon which it grew belonged, however, to India and there is also the undeniable fact that it served an Indian religion; it is mainly because of these that a brief discussion of the school is necessary in a book on Indian art.

Situated close to the north-western gates of India, the territory lay exposed to foreign contacts and influences from time immemorial.

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The Persians, the Greeks, the Śakas, the Pahlavas, the Kushāṇas, etc. successively came and settled there, and the result was the birth of a composite culture that found expression in an eclectic school of art, abundant in output and, more or less, contemporary with the flourishing period of the indigenous art movement at Mathurā. The Gandhāra movement is usually described as Graeco-Buddhist; it has to be borne in mind, however, that the school comes into view only after the Greek domination of this part of the Indian subcontinent is already a thing of the past. The principal patrons were the Śakas and the Kushāṇas who came from Central Asia. The technique employed is unquestionably borrowed from Hellenistic standards, as modified by such trends as Iranian, Scythian, etc.; but the themes depicted are Indian, almost exclusively Buddhist.

Already in the centuries preceding the Christian era the peoples who had settled in the north-western territories of the Indian subcontinent and the Punjab had come under the influence of Indian religions. This fact is testified to not only by inscriptions recording religious benefactions by the foreign peoples, but also by the appearance of symbols and deities associated with Indian religious cults on the coins of the foreign rulers The spread of Indian religions among these foreign peoples is an interesting study, and it is through the impact of such religions as Buddhism, Bhāgavatism, etc. that these alien peoples were gradually Indianised and absorbed in the complex texture of the Indian population. The Gandhāra school of art, devoted to the service of an Indian religion but following mainly an extraneous and eclectic art tradition, represents really a stage and process of this Indianisation and has to be viewed in that light.

The Gandhāra school of art is well known, not only because of its abundant productions, but also on account of the fact that being nearer to a standard and ideal, rooted ultimately on the Classical, it is more easily comprehensible to the Western scholars. Important remains have come from different parts of the territory, known in ancient times as Gandhāra, which according to Indian tradition stretched on both sides of the Indus *(Sindhor ubhayataḥ pārśve—Rāmāyaṇa)*. The material employed is usually a dark grey slate in the early period ; stucco and terracotta were the favourite mediums in the later epochs. Metal objects belonging to the school are also occasionally known.

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The dating of Gandhāra sculptures is rather a matter of much speculation. This is due largely to the absence of definitely dated records. It is true that a few sculptures are found to bear inscriptions with dates without any mention, however, of the era to which the dates are to be assigned. The actual chronological position of the relevant sculptures remains uncertain consequently. The question, hence, of the origin of a different direction or of a different style, as the Gandhāra school certainly was, apart from the larger, uniform and consistent indigenous development, is an embarrasing one and opinions usually vary regarding the problem and date of its origin. The excavations of Marshall at Taxila, carried out with a certain amount of exactness and circumspection, may result in establishing some kind of order in the elucidation of dates, and these, coupled with the evidences of other excavations and finds, appear to indicate that the ruler associated with the earliest remains of the Buddhist art of Gandhāra was Azes I belonging approximately to the early years of the latter half of the first century BC.[17] The school had thus begun to take shape after the Greek political power had already declined, but before the Kushāṇas had come upon the scene. The days of its expansion and florescence coincide with the period of the great Kushāṇa rulers, particularly of Kanishka, and the school continues an abundant production till the third and fourth centuries AD.[18]

Though derived, technically and stylistically, from an extraneous and eclectic plastic standard, the themes were of Indian origin and according to some scholars the importance of the school consists in the revolutionary procedure of representing, for the first time, the image of the Buddha in anthropomorphic shape. Independent images, either standing or seated, occur very frequently, while in the numerous represntations of the scenes from the life of the Master, which constitute the principal repertoire of the Gandhāra artists, he is depicted, with very few exceptions, in human shape. This new orientation in Indian religion and art is said to be due to the contribution of this eclectic school. The point has been touched upon in the previous section in connection with the images of Buddha-Bodhisattva from Mathurā, based on indigenous plastic and iconographic ideals. The Gandhāra Buddha plastically belongs to an extraneous standard, but "follows Indian tradition in every essential of its iconography."[19] Although bearing all the iconographic marks and traits of the Indian

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tradition, the Buddha of Gandhāra is rendered in terms of divine figures of the Graeco-Roman pantheon and with such features as are wholly foreign to Indian notions. Robed in a thick garment arranged in the fashion of a Roman *toga* covering both the shoulders, with hair fashioned in wavy curls, with a physiognomy and expression unknown to Indian norms, and sometimes with a moustache or turban, Gandhāra artists turned the Buddha into an Apollo, and such representations, however popular to an eclectic population, failed to satisfy Indian standards and Indian mind. The reliefs representing the scenes from the life of the Master, even in spite of their minutest details, appear to be mechanical reproductions without any spontaneity or emotional character that distinguished the reliefs of early Indian art as evidenced at Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya or Amarāvatī. Moreover, such renderings, as those of the Indian lotus in the fashion of a prickly artichoke, indicate that the Gandhāra artists did not always find themselves at home in translating satisfactorily Indian ideas. The Buddha image of the Gandhāra school, as a whole, conveys also the same impression. The Mathurā Buddha lacked spiritual expression, so also did the Gandhāra one. But the former, based on indigenous standard, plastically and iconographically, expressed an Indian conception and was true to the Indian ideals, psychologically as well as culturally. In this respect the Buddha-Bodhisattva image from Mathurā may be described as a more successful representation of the Master than the Gandhāra one which reflects a foreign style and ideal, though in the service of an Indian religion. "Judging from expression, intention, conception and artistic mastery of the subject," says Bachhofer, "the Buddha-Bodhisattvas from Mathura are purely Indian."[20] The Gandhāra Buddha, though a resourceful adaptation of Indian notions, is foreign in conception and outlook. It is possible that so far as the extant documents are concerned the Gandhāra Buddha might have been prior in date; but as Kramrisch significantly observes, "in no case does priority establish a claim of the Gandhāran type as the origin of the Buddha image".[21] Bachhofer, by a skilful analysis of the two types, has shown again that the Buddha-Bodhisattvas of Mathurā were anterior to the influx of the Gandhāran tradition at Mathurā.[22] The Gandhāra influence had nothing to do with the indigenous type which served as the model for all Indian images of the subsequent day.

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Benjamin Rowland, the eminent Harvard Professor, has instituted a comparison between two typical Buddha heads, one from Gandhāra and the other from Mathurā, each representing a developed expression of its style.[23] He says, nothing could be more striking than the contrast offered by the two. "Nor could anything more emphatically reveal the contribution of the school of Mathurā to Indian Buddhist art." Further, "the Gandhāra head is a curious mixture of abstraction and realism; the brows and eyes are modelled with the hard dryness of carving characteristic of Late Antique Art, whereas the lower part of the face is sculptured with apparent concern for the realistic definition of the structure of the mouth and the chin, so that the result is at once mask-like and inconsistent. The head of the Buddha from Mathurā is, on the contrary, completely consistent in the sculptor's self-imposed abstraction. The individual features are integrated into the essentially spheroidal mass of the head, and no lingering over exactitude of anatomical detail interferes with the primary concern for the presentation of the solid volume of the whole." There is, again "a suggestion of expansive inner force achieved by the composition of the head as a collection of subtly interlocking and swelling planes, from the curve of cheek and jowl to the related curvature of eyelids and brows. In contrast to the cold and often rather vapid expression of the Gandhāra Buddhas, the faces of the statue dedicated by Friar Bala (fig. 32) and other examples from the Kushan school at Mathurā are characterised by an open radiant expression; the eyes are fully open, the cheeks round and full, the mouth ample, with the lips drawn into a slight smile. This smile is probably the earliest appearance of the only possible device by which the Indian sculptor could indicate the inner contentment and repose of the Buddha;...The general impression given by the Sarnath statue—grandiose, weighty, and yet characterised by a certain athletic litheness—marks the gradual development of the Indian ideal of physical beauty that reaches its mature expression in the work of the Gupta period."

The chronology of the Gandhāra school, it has already been stated, has been in a state of uncertainty and flux. A rough order, obtained as a result of the latest investigations, may, however, be indicated. The earliest specimen of this art, so far discovered, seems to be the Bimaran reliquary, a round box of gold *repoussé* inlaid with rubies. It was dis-

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covered more than a century ago in the ruins of a stūpa at Bimaran, near Jalalabad in Afghanistan, in association with a number of coins of the Śaka ruler Azes (I) to whose reign the reliquary may be assigned circumstantially.[24] It is adorned all around with figures of the Buddha in niches formed by slender pilasters supporting semi-circular ogival arches.* The mobility of the figures is striking, and the free and dynamic quality is further accentuated by the flowing treatment of the drapery, conceived plastically as a separate volume with its own weight and covering the body entirely from the shoulders to the ankles. It is not impossible to recognise in this a debased form of Roman colonial art mixed with other extraneous elements of diverse origins. In this context may also be mentioned another reliquary from Shah-ji-ki-Dheri, near Peshawar, bearing an inscription which refers it to the reign of Kanishka.[25]† Compared to the other it is rather a crude piece of work. The drum is occupied by figures of the Buddha in between the waves of the garland supported by Atlantes. Another Buddha figure appears on the top of the lid and is flanked by figures of Brahmā and Śakra. It is interesting to notice a close resemblance of the representations of the Master on this reliquary with the imitations of the Gandhāra style Buddha at Mathurā, described in previous section. Benjamin Rowland says, perhaps rightly, that the style is "a mixture of the archaic technique of the Early Indian Schools combined with borrowings from Classical Sources."[26] Its importance lies in the date that it bears which, according to the chronology accepted by us, is somewhere in the eighties of the first century of the Christian era.

We may now take note of the few dated sculptures of the Gandhāra school to which reference has been made previously. The earliest in this context is the free-standing image of the Buddha from Loriyan Tongai bearing the date 318;[27] the second is the Buddha from Charsada, dated in year 384;[28] and the third is an image of Hāritī from Skarah-Dheri, dated in year 399.[29] Unfortunately, the era to which these dates are to be assigned has not been specified, thereby leading to a chronological uncertainty. It is reasonable to believe that all the dates are to be referred to one

*A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 88; Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 38B.
†A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 89; Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 38A.

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single era; scholars, however, differ in their opinions with regard to the interpretation of this era. The prevailing view is that the era used in these dates is the Seleucid era of 312 BC in which case the dates should be respectively AD 6, AD 72 and AD 87. Benjamin Rowland,[30] however, with his view of the initial year of Kanishka either in AD 128 or AD 144, would like to identify the epoch of these dates with the hypothetical Śaka era of Rapson starting about 150 BC. In the context of our view of Kushāṇa chronology, it should be observed, the ascription of these dates to the Seleucid era fits in better.

In the first sculpture* the Buddha is seen in a static standing pose confronting the spectator. The drapery, apparently an adaptation of the Roman dress, may be recognised to be plastically treated as a separate and voluminous mass; despite this, there is a conscious attempt to make the form underneath the garment visible. Contrary to Indian notion the Buddha is seen wearing sandals and a number of ornaments and amulets. The *ūrṇā* appears between the eyebrows; the hair is treated in flowing curls, the *ushṇīsha* above the head being similarly treated. In the treatment of the physiognomy there is a faint echo of the Roman manner as modified in the eastern provinces. A standing image of Bodhisattva, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (U.S.A.),[31] supplies the nearest counterpart of the Loriyan Tongai Buddha, except for the moustache, and has to be dated about the same period. An almost similar image is now preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi (fig. 40). The well known Buddha image from Takht-i-Bahi; now in Berlin, because of its treatment appears also to be nearer in date to that of the Loriyan Tongai image. These sculptures together supply the norm of the Gandhāra school in the early half of the first century AD. In the next dated image, the Buddha from Charsada (384/AD 72), the norm is continued along with a further pronounced treatment towards a transparent drapery. In the standing Buddha from Takht and the seated Buddha from Sahri Bahlol transparent drapery reaches a convincing solution. The movement towards a diaphanous treatment of the drapery becomes gradually prominent and asserts itself fully in the later centuries and might have been due to contacts with the indigenous Indian tradition of which such a treatment was the ideal. The

*1st ed., fig. 63.

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image of Hāritī from Skarah Dheri (399/AD 87) supplies, however, an exception to the prevailing trend. The drapery clings to the body closely with small parallel folds thus suppressing the transparency to a certain extent. In this sculpture there are again signs of stylisation and throughout the second century AD the Gandhāra style follows a path of progressive schematisation and fluted drapery with parallel folds becomes the rule. The early group of Buddha figures, that is, those belonging to the first century AD is distinguished by clear and impressive heads with long and beautifully drawn curves outlining the lineaments. They show locks of hair in wavy curls overflowing the *ushṇīsha* wherever it is marked. The body is balanced with clear-cut proportions and the attitude is relaxed. The second century AD in Gandhāra art, in the context of the achievements of the first century, seems to represent a period of decadence and to provide a strange contrast to the contemporary artistic movements in Northern (Mathurā) and Southern India (Veṅgī).

Gandhāra art comes into view during the period of Śaka domination. The art of the Greek princely courts, preceding the Śaka phase, is exemplified only on their coins and this was strongly coloured by Hellenism. During the rule of the Śaka and Kushāṇa patrons, when this art takes shape, the Hellenistic traditions, if there had been any in the plastic art of this region, had completely disappeared. Gandhāra art flourished in a territory which witnessed the influx and commingling of many peoples with diverse strains and cultures. Naturally, a spirit of eclecticism and collectivism prevailed leading to the growth of an art tradition in which Roman colonial, West Asian, Central Asian and, to a small extent, also Indian standards made their contributions. It assumes a local character in the service of an Indian religion, *i.e.*, Buddhism which was experiencing a phenomenal expansion at that time. In the formative phase this art gained stature, fertilised, as it was, by manifold sources of inspiration successfully integrated. In the second century a schematisation leads, however, to a degeneration of the earlier artistic forces.

From the third century a revival of the artistic tendencies of the first appears in view. During this second period of the Gandhāra school stone sculptures have become rare, both in quality as well as in quantity; stucco (fig. 41) and terracotta of easier tractability are the favourite materials in artistic pursuits of this period. The style is much

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freer than that of the schematic productions of the second century AD. The drapery, again, is progressively of the transparent gossamer type and in the body treatment the harmony of rhythmic lines, as we feel in the earlier productions but much softened down, is more in evidence. In the attitude of the figures there is noticed again the same tendency to relax (fig. 42). The two significant centres of this late phase of Gandhāra art are Mohra Moradu and Jaulian. This art is nearer to that of the first century AD than to works of the second. The revival of artistic impulse in Gandhāra after a period of decadence has naturally to fall back upon the earlier productions of the first century AD. Geographical as well as ethnic reasons probably precluded the possibility of turning to the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley for artistic inspiration. It is this late Gandhāra tradition which was carried to Central Asia and China via Afghanistan.

"Undoubtedly there was at one time a great corpus of Gandhāra sculpture in metal, of which only a few small statuettes survive."[33] Reference has already been made to reliquaries, one from Bimaran and the other from Shah-ji-ki-Dheri. Besides, Sirkap (Taxila) has yeilded a few metal statuettes, including the figures of Harpocrates and Dionysius, apparently of Alexandrian origin. The bronze figure of Herakles from Nigrai, now in the British Museum, London, belongs also to the same style. In a certain manner they confirm the intimate relations, cultural and commercial, between Gandhāra and Roman West. To the later phases of Gandhāra art belong a few metal sculptures of the Buddha,* now dispersed among museums of the West, which unmistakeably remind one of the Mathurā adaptation of the Gandhāra Buddha. It is these metal sculptures which indicate a gradual Indianisation of the Gandhāra tradition in the later phases of this art.

In the fabric of Indian art as a whole the Gandhāra school occupies nothing more than that of a mere passing phase and has only a very slight contribution, except in a certain manner and a few motifs which, again, were quickly Indianised. In aesthetic import and significance the products of this school can hardly be compared to the spontaneous productions at Bharhut, Sanchi, etc. or with those of the later Indian schools of the Gupta and the Pallava periods with all

*Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 86 A.

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their emotional and spiritual content. This eclectic art is an eastward expansion of Hellenism in its Roman colonial context, as transformed by Iranian and Scythian elements and applied to Indian subjects. There is no doubt that Gandhāra art "enjoyed a greater longevity and also maintained a monotony of expression unlike that of any other Indian school."[34] For Indian art, however, its significance is negligible. From the Indian point of view it is a westward expansion of Indian culture in a foreign and eclectic garb. As Kramrisch[35] eloquently observes, "Gandhāra . . . . occupies a position apart. For if it is Indian and colonial from a Hellenistic point of view, it is Hellenistic and colonial when viewed from India." Benjamin Rowland sums up the latest investigations into the problems of the school in his following statement[36] which seems to be more apt: "The Gandhāra school is, indeed, best described as the easternmost appearance of the art of the Roman Empire, especially in its late and provincial manifestations."

(iii) Western India: Karle, Kanheri

In the early centuries of the Christian era the reliefs in the rock-cut caves of Western India tell of plastic experiences which, though undoubtedly related to what has been described as the aboriginal trend in rock carvings that we have noticed in the earlier epoch, bears at the same time the impress of the all-pervading classical ideal of line as the organising factor of the plastic mass that reached its fruition in Mathurā art of the early post-Christian date. The heaving plastic form, broad and expansive in content in accordance with the aboriginal trend in rock carving, feels the awareness of the disciplined rhythm of the classical concept and seems to be inspired by that ideal. The panels bearing the figures of the donor couple or of the dancing couple at Karle (figs. 43 & 44) and of the donors at Kanheri illustrate this significant phase of the Western idiom of rock carving. The plastic exuberance enclosed within a powerful frame has, in the ample, but disciplined modelling, a latent power that seems to be almost on the point of bursting forth. But this latent vitality is kept restrained within an animated and articulated body, calm and self-assured in the awareness of its own strength. Illumined by a spirit of sustained expectancy, this art shows further scope and possibilities in the subsequent period.

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(iv) South India: Veṅgī

In South India the school of Veṅgī had already made itself felt as a definitive movement as early as the second century BC. The initial attempts represented by the Jaggayyapeta reliefs (*ante.* p. 60) give evidence of certain individual characteristics that distinguish the southern movement from the northern. Early Amarāvatī reliefs of the first century BC carry on this southern expression which, in the early centuries of the Christian era, bursts forth into unprecedented activity. As we know from the Greek accounts (*Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* by an unknown Greek sailor—first century AD, and the *Geography* of Ptolemy—second century AD), the ports of both the coasts of the Peninsular south were active centres of maritime trade with the Western world ultimately converging to Rome. That the balance of this trade was in favour of India is known from the statement of Pliny, a Latin author of the first century AD, and further attested by the finds of hoards of Roman gold coins in the coastal districts of South India. A Roman trading post has also been exposed as a result of excavations at Arikamedu, near Pondicherry.[37] The prosperity that Peninsular India enjoyed in consequence of these fortunate circumstances might have largely contributed to this renewed artistic activity in the south in the early centuries of the Christian era. The impetus was, no doubt, supplied by the ardent religious zeal of the patrons, many of whom belonged to the royal families that ruled in this region successively.

Amarāvatī[38] marks the centre of this southern movement and has bequeathed to us a substantial series of sculptures indicating a jealous and sustained artistic activity that reaches its height in the second century AD. Major collections of these sculptures may now be seen in the British Museum, London (U. K.) and the Government Museum, Madras. Besides, Nagārjunakoṇḍa,[39] Alluru, Gumadidurru[40] and Goli,[41] all in the lower Kṛishṇā region, have each left a fair amount of works. Such an abundant wealth of remains can hardly be found in any other school or phase of early Indian art, Mathurā excepted. It has been estimated that at Amarāvatī alone nearly 1700 square feet of space had once been covered with carvings. In technical proficiency and plastic quality the school of Veṅgī has, again, a distinct place in the history of early artistic activities in India.

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The distinctive traits and idioms that characterised the early phase of the southern Veṅgī school (second-first centuries BC) have already been noted (*ante*. pp. 60-61). In spite of a marked individuality, distinctly local in character and expression, the achievements of the school cannot be regarded as isolated from the general style prevailing in other parts of India. In the subsequent period, *i.e.* in the early centuries of the Christian era, the school continues to thrive in all its local peculiarities, but such products of the Veṅgī school cannot be disassociated from those of the contemporary movements in Northern India. Rather, the North and the South illustrate generally the same directions, but differ in the accent on the local traits. The southern movement, as represented by the Veṅgī school at the height of its florescence, constitutes, however, a more intensified expression of the same common style.

The artistic activity at Amarāvatī begins in the pre-Christian era and continues for several hundred years.[42] The remains consist of carved slabs belonging to the rails and drum of the stūpa *(māhachetiya)* (fig. 45) which is now gone. They constitute a very extensive series of relief sculptures; but as the ruins were used for a long time as a quarry for limestone a major part of these is now lost. The remains at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa are also fairly abundant and consist of similar series of reliefs connected again with a *mahāchetiya* and a number of other religious establishments. The chief patrons were the rulers of the Ikshvāku dynasty, especially the royal ladies who were devout followers of Buddhism (the rulers themselves practised the Vedic religion). One Ābhīra ruler of the name of Vasusheṇa is also associated with certain endowments at the site of Brahmanical affiliation. Chronologically the remains at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa belong to the third and part also of the fourth century, the activities there probably starting from the closing years of the second century AD. To this phase may also be placed the reliefs from Alluru and Gumadidurru. Rarely, however the remains at these places attain the level of Amarāvatī, which, we have already observed, marks the centre of the Veṅgī school, though Nāgārjuṇakoṇḍa is also conspicuous for its abundant productions and high standard of workmanship. In the reliefs from Goli there may be recognised a loss of the earlier plastic quality and disciplined rhythm, which is also noticeable, though not in so remarkable a degree, in certain later works from Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. An exhaus-

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tion seems to have followed the peak of perfection reached in the second century AD, and with these late works the school of Veṅgī ultimately dissolves. The plastic movement in Veṅgī is highly important and significant, not only because of its abundant remains of remarkably outstanding qualities, but also on account of the manner in which it carries on the traditions of early Indian art, develops them in its own spectacularly dramatic way and finally leads on to the bold and imposing compositions of the subsequent Pallava-Chālukya period.

The material used by the artists of this school is a kind of greenish limestone, previously mistaken as marble. Comparatively easier to handle, it admits of clear and precise modelling, at the same time, a refined surface treatment as well. The vast mass of the output consists of relief carvings; free-standing sculptures are also not unknown. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa has yielded, again, a few metal sculptures. Whatever the material, the style remains the same.

In the remains from the site of Amarāvatī we have the most significant and instructive examples for a study of the Veṅgī school of art in all its aspects. The few works of the first century BC are characterised by a slenderness of form and a corresponding shallowness of relief, already noticeable in works of the previous century from Jaggayyapeta (*ante*. pp. 60-61). Compared to the plastic achievements of Jaggayyapeta, early Amarāvatī reliefs are slightly deeper cut and, as a consequence, the figures appear to be of a sturdier build. The body is composed of strongly accentuated masses organically related to one another within a sure and decisive outline. The dress of the figures has close affinities with the garments seen in the figures of the Sanchi reliefs. The means of representation, particularly such compositional element as a predilection for diagonal movement, may also be found to have its parallels in the Sanchi idiom. In general plastic effect, again, the Amarāvatī reliefs of this period offer close analogies with those of the Madhyadeśa school.

In the first century AD the leading idiom of Amarāvati is represented by a "heavy and spreading plastic form" in which the linear sensitiveness of the earlier works suffers to a certain extent. It is from this trend that one may perhaps trace the heavy body structure generally employed in some of the early reliefs from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. In such reliefs the precision of outlines is, to a certain extent, subdued

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"for the sake of a densely packed plastic contiguity", as Kramrisch puts it.[43] The reliefs from Alluru and Gumadudurru also share these characteristics.

In Amarāvatī works of the second century AD the school of Veṅgī blossoms forth in all its characteristic brilliance and qualities. Inscriptions found at the site[44] indicate that during the time of the Sātavāhana rulers, Vāśishṭhīputra Śrī Pulumāvi, Śrī Yajña and Śrī Śivamaka Sāta (who may roughly be placed in the second and third quarters of the second century AD) extensive additions and embellishments were carried on at Amarāvatī. These works were presumably connected with the renovation and restoration of the original *mahāchetiya* of earlier date. A new zeal appears to have inspired a renewed artistic activity along with a recovery of the disciplined linear movement of the earlier trend. Amarāvatī works of this period capture, again, the most distinctive characteristics of the southern movement.

The Amarāvatī artists of this period seem to have been inspired by a sense of exuberance as well as extravagance. The outer and the inner faces of the rails and the coping stones as well as the casing slabs of the stūpa drum are now found to be covered by a rich and intricate web of figures and ornaments. The South at this time, it has already been observed, maintained a flourishing maritime trade and the wealth that poured in as a consequence is likely to have supplied a dominating factor in this brilliant and unprecedent efflorescence of plastic activity. This state of plenty is symbolised in the frequently occuring motif of *pūrṇaghaṭa* (fig. 46). Another equally potent and vital motive force might have been furnished by the reorientation of original Buddhism by Nāgārjuna who was active in this region in the second century AD.[45] These apart, the artistic movement in this part of the country appears to have been more sustained and continuous, when compared to that in the North. Here the Indian genius pursued its course more freely without any spectre of foreign intrusions, as in the North, to disturb or hamper its natural course and inherent tendencies. The Veṅgī art of this period represents, hence, the logical sequence and culmination of the highly linearised plastic tradition that we notice in Jaggayyapeta and early Amarāvatī works.

The linearised idiom of the Veṅgī school expresses itself more ardently in the Amarāvatī reliefs of the second century AD. On the

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whole, the Amarāvatī expression of the southern idiom is more elegant and elastic. In this art a supreme importance is given to the human figure. To quote Bachhofer:[46] "The men are the main point, and it is their actions and doings which are to be perceived above all; whereas the landscape and the architectural surroundings come in the second place and the eye is expected to dwell on them only as upon something accompanying the tenor of human actions."

The reliefs are slightly deeper cut and the modelling rounder and fuller. The lines are precise and at the same time more sensitive. The delicately modelled bodies exhibit heavy, heaving torsos supported on legs of unearthly slenderness. The forms are elongated and at the same time of sturdier build. With the emphasis given to the human figure nature, seen in all its exuberance in the early classical phase, gradually recedes from its importance and is ultimately eliminated. It is as if the human figure now assumes the function that nature served in early classical art and conveys fully its exuberance, elasticity and pliability. Rocks and streams and vegetation occur, no doubt, but merely as inert signs to indicate location or for their own symbolical significance. With hardly any plastic coherence they merely serve to fill in the reliefs, already densely crowded. It is the human figure that forms the pivot of Veṅgī art (fig. 47). "Scene after scene teems with tall and slender human figures; they are everywhere in abundance, in all poses and attitudes, in action and movement, in ease and relaxation, in high tension and elegant langour, sitting, standing, bending, flying, dancing, hanging, hovering—always exhibiting sturdy but delicately modelled bodies with heavy heaving shoulders borne on a pair of slender supple legs, all definite in their precise and exuberant outline, and characterised by an amazing elasticity of movement."[47]

The subject matter of Amarāvatī works and generally of Veṅgī art of this period is, no doubt, religious, as the inscriptions testify to. The purpose is to depict the legends of Buddhism in all their infinite details. But, as it so often happens, the art itself is hardly religious. It is significant, as Bachhofer observes,[48] "how religion is being used as a pretext for the purpose of singing a wildly enthusiastic, rapturous paean of worldly life (fig. 49)." The ideal of disciplined life or of worldly renunciation is nowhere in evidence. Rather, it is the elegant and exuberant life in this world which the artist aims to

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depict. He confines his themes to the doings of a mundane court and society—themes that would lend a human appeal to his works. In delineating such themes he does not hesitate even to go beyond the liturgical conventions. The real tenor of the legend is concealed behind a description of life in an affluent and aristocratic society or of the joys of worldly existence. And what a rich description it is! Every scene teems with youthful forms of aristocratic build in all possible attitudes and bends. The tall, slender and attenuated forms jostle one another. The smooth and resilient flesh, seemingly pleasurable to the touch, lends a sensuous effect to the figures. This is more so with regard to the delicate and alluring female forms with their full busts, slender waists, heavy hips, coquettish countenances and almost serpentine suppleness (fig. 48). It is not without reason that Coomaraswamy[49] describes Amarāvatī art as "the most voluptuous and the most delicate flower of Indian sculpture". There is no doubt that this art is sensuous, and even frankly so. But compared to the unabashed lewdness of the Mathurā school, the sensuousness of Amarāvatī seems to be more refined and more restrained. Amarāvatī art is undoubtedly saturated with a naive paganism. But it is the innocent delight and joyous freshness which the artist aims to depict in his female forms of Botticellian grace and elegance. What the artist tries to express is the love of life and the joy of existence. The stories and the legends that he depicts are transformed, hence, into "intensified instances of life"[50] in its fullest enjoyment and experience. Here we have the wildest transports of joy alternating with outburts of violent passion. Everything is dramatic and dynamic, nervous and agitated. A nervously irritated disposition seems to have taken hold of man. Bachhofer rightly observes:[51] "A violent sense for everything terrestrial manifests itself, as if Indian art had taken leave of this world with a tumultuous feast, before deliberately entering the cold fields of spirituality".

A clearly expressed contour of the individual figure with a perfect integrity of line in all its smooth and gliding flexibility and closely knitting all the figures into an organic entity speaks of the aptitudes and capabilities of the Amarāvatī artists. They seem to have advanced greatly in respect of compositional coherence. Seldom does a particular composition lose its obvious unity. Each composition seems to have been knit together by the rhythmic lines that effectively portray

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the movements and directions of the figures. Such movements glide from figure to figure and bind the whole scene together. The subject matter in all its dramatic intensity is another unifying factor in the composition. The arrangement of the figures and settings in a number of planes constitutes, again, a notable technical advance on the part of the artists. This has been sought to be attributed to extraneous influence. It is worth while to remember, however, that attempts in this direction had already been made at Sanchi. The alternation of erect and squatting attitudes prevents an arrangement of the figures in schematic rows. Further, there is always the endeavour on the part of the Veṅgī artists to render an effect of depth extension. This is achieved in a variety of ways. The bodies are turned and bent at various angles—front, back, sideways and even spirally—with the result that the shallow areas that are left around oblige the eye to penetrate to the depth. Oversecting and foreshortening are increasingly applied thereby leading to an illusion of depth. Again, the principal scene is often shifted to the background thus compelling the gaze of the spectator to wander to the depth. In the representation of the interiors the artists are also found to have mastered depth in an ingenious manner. Further, there is a suggestion of perspective in the attempt to vary the sizes of the figures in the successive planes.

The attitude of the Veṅgī artists is, in the main, confined to a portrayal of the joys and delights that pervade this worldly life and existence. It is hence that they always show a preference for youthful forms in the height of their vigour and elegance. Old age is purposely ignored as such an aspect is likely to disturb the rapturous enjoyment of life. Pot-bellied dwarfish figures of *gaṇas* (figs. 49 & 50) are introduced in some of the compositions and they serve to accentuate, by contrast, physical charms of the other figures. Individually also, the figures themselves, with their sturdy bodies carried by limbs of willowy slenderness, depict a tension between the perfect and the opposite, as Kramrisch[52] observes. A conscious contrast is also effected by the alternation in the same composition of the winding movements of the figures and the rigid verticalism of architecture (fig. 49). In the glaring light of the tropical sun the silhouettes of the figures and other contents of the composition are highly accentuated by deep shadows. Rightly has the style been described as picturesque, and it is this effect which the artists had calculated their works to have.

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The mastery of technique of the Veṅgī artists, manifest in a variety of directions, results in manifold interlacings of the elements. The figures seem to emerge from the depth in sweeping and breathless movements and achieve roundness in the process. The individual figure is carried by a dynamic rhythm which extends beyond the limits of the figure to the group (fig. 47), thereby binding the entire composition in a large and sweeping movement, often parabolic in shape and thus "dynamically open".[53] The attempt towards a dynamic compositional unity, first started at Bharhut in a faltering manner, reaches its maturity and fruition in the Veṅgī reliefs.

Along with a portrayal of the worldly life in all its vehemence the Veṅgī artists show further a new capacity for rendering psychological states. The powerful emotions of the human heart, its joys and sorrows, ecstasy of enjoyment and experience, passionate outbursts and tender moods; triumphant elation and painful depression, intense devotion and religious fervour, kindly solicitude and sundry other sentiments, noble as well ignoble, find appropriate expressions in the hands of the Veṅgī artists. The figures now seem to live with all the fibres of their own beings (figs. 47 and 51) and faithfully play the parts that they are to perform in the scenes. It is, however, only the body lineaments that convey the different moods and sentiments. Spiritually and, to a certain extent intellectually also, the figures still remain unenlightened.

Veṅgī art attains the height of its expression in the Amarāvatī works of the second half of the second century AD and the above observations apply to this phase. The works from the other sites seldom reach this level. In the third century AD the clearly expressed contour is no longer in evidence (fig. 52) and gradually dissolves under the onrush of wild and petulant movements, almost amounting to a kind of Maenadic frenzy. In this milieu it is sometimes difficult to distinguish any definite and palpable form. "The entwining and interlacing of the figures", Bachhofer[54] observes, "mock at all attempts at discriminating clarification and arrangement". Already in the second century AD the dynamic movements of the bodies are found to have extended beyond their limits. In the tremulous and disintegrating lines and curves of the later phase, now almost in a state of confusion and anarchy, some scholars recognise an attempt to escape from the limitations of the body, but with the help of the body.[55]

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A discussion of Veṅgī art is not expected to be complete without a reference to the images of the Buddha, either standing or seated, which are fairly common. They appear either as free-standing isolated sculptures or within the relief compositions. As a rule, they have spiral *ushṇīshas* and the drapery is found to leave the right shoulder bare. In a few images, however, the garment covers both the shoulders; but the number of such images is insignificant. In body physiognomy, heavy and massive in conception, as well as in the style of the drapery with the folds and seams indicated by incised lines and overlapping ridges, the Veṅgī type of Buddha images appears to be closely allied to the Mathurā type of Buddha-Bodhisattva. "The lines of the drapery...no longer have the rather dry inert character..., but are organized in an ordered rhythm of lines undulating obliquely across the body and imparting a feeling of movement as well as reinforcing the swelling expansiveness of the form beneath."[56] Despite the apparent affiliation to the Mathurā type, the rugged massiveness of the northern school has, however, been much softened down in Veṅgī in conformity with the slimness of the southern idiom. Benjamin Rowland illustrates a typical Buddha head from Amarāvatī (fig. 53) which reveals a certain relationship to the heads of the Mathurā images in general fullness and warmth of conception; but, "in contrast to the roundness of the facial contour of the Mathurā Buddhas, the heads from Amarāvatī are of a more narrow oval shape."[57]

The influence of Veṅgī art was extensive in time as well as in space. Its impact on the subsequent art of this region is well known. "The way in which the whole composition is unified through the rhythmic lines provided by the movements and directions of the figures and the dramatic content seem to lead direct to the reliefs of the Pallava and Chālukya periods."[58] The form and content of Gupta classical trend cannot be understood without a reference to the achievements of the Veṅgī school. The Veṅgī style extended to Ceylon naturally because of commercial contacts and religious affiliations, perhaps also on account of some ethnic reasons. Not only that. Its impact was felt still further afield. The Veṅgī type of Buddha images, and not improbably of South Indian workmanship, have been discovered as far away as Dong-duong in Champā (Indo-China)[59] and at Sempaga in the Celebes.[60]

It will not be inappropriate to close this section with an admira-

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ble summing up of this art by Benjamin Rowland.[61] "It is unfortunate that the reliefs of Amarāvatī are not better known. Certainly from the point of view of complex and yet always coherent composition, of massing of chiaroscuro, and aliveness of surface treatment they have seldom been surpassed in the history of relief sculpture.....It is well to reiterate in conclusion that, for the later history of Indian art, not only for sculpture in the Gupta period, but even more for the dynamic carving under the Hindu dynasties that succeeded the Āndhras in the South, the importance of the work at Amarāvatī is immeasurable."

(v) Geṇeral Review

A general review of classical Indian sculpture of the early centuries of the Christain era will at once reveal the worldly character of this art. Never is India known to have been so deeply steeped in everything terrestrial as in this period. It is a paradox that this intensely worldly character is reflected in an art which is avowedly religious in theme and purpose. Under this religious garb it is the love of life and joy of existence that constitute the keynote of classical Indian sculpture of the first three centuries of the Christian epoch. In this art the human body in its physical concept is considered to be the most fundamental factor. The asset is also the human figure. At Karle the human figure is illumined by a proud and sober serenity, along with a gay cheerfulness suggesting a sense of comfortable enjoyment. This tone becomes freer at Mathurā which brings in the fullness of the human body in its physical charm and sensuous beauty, coupled with a general disposition towards a graceful carelessness. This changes further in Veṅgī art into a violently agitated experience. In the earlier phase Sanchi had introduced "gaiety, emotion aud vivaciousness born of a fuller acceptance of life and its joys and movements".[62] Along with a refinement of the physical sensuousness of Mathurā, Veṅgī carries on the above Sanchi tradition and transforms it into the wildest enjoyment of life almost to a point of fury. Neither before, nor in the succeeding phases, has the human frame been conceived as an organic growth, as something fresh and living, as it was at Sanchi, Karle, Mathurā and Amarāvatī. Instead of being realistic, the artist always prefers an idealised type and confines himself to the sphere of youth and grace. His

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ideal is, no doubt, the classical Indian ideal of handsome men and beautiful women, the former with broad shoulders, mighty chests and tense abdomens, and the latter with full bosoms, narrow waists, broad hips and almost willowy suppleness. The forms with warm and resilient flesh seem to vibrate. Along with this, one recognises a technical sufficiency which faithfully renders the optical impressions, spatial relations of objects together with an illusion of depth. All this proceeds from experiences gathered through centuries of efforts and experiments, and the fact that the achievements of Veṅgī art had their beginnings at Sanchi clearly precludes the theory of any extraneous influence that has been advocated. In the subsequent phase classical Indian art reaches its spiritual destiny; one misses, however, the spontaneity and vivaciousness of worldly life that characterise the artistic activities of the early centuries of the Christian era. Without these achievements, however, the import and significance of subsequent Indian art can hardly be fully apprehended.

(vi) Ivory-Carvings

Our account of this phase of classical Indian art is likely to remain incomplete without a reference to the art of the Indian ivory-carvers. The Indians knew from very early times the various uses of the tusk of the elephant for domestic as well as for artistic and decorative purposes. Ivory-carving has been an ancient craft in India. Ivory objects, mostly of domestic use, have been unearthed in excavations at several places, including the excavations at the Indus valley sites which go back to about the third millennium BC. In ancient literature mention is made of the ivory-carvers *(dantakāra, dantaghātaka)* and it is the ivory-carvers of Vidiśā who were responsible for the carvings on the south gate of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi. The *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana mentions dolls and toys made of ivory *(gajadantamayī duhitṛikā)* as suitable gifts to a newly married wife. The *Amarakosha* (*Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* of Amarasiṁha) refers to dolls made of ivory as a speciality of the Pañchāla country. The *Raghuvaṁśa* of Kālidāsa and the *Śiśupāla-badha* of Māgha describe ear-rings and other ornaments made of ivory. The *Bṛihat Saṁhitā* of Varāhamihira mentions ivory as a suitable material for inlay with wooden furnitures and incidentally refers also to the portion of the tusk suitable for such works. In the *Harivaṁśa* we find again reference to the use of ivory in architec-

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ture and windows made of ivory are mentioned in connection with the description of the palace of the Asura king Hiraṇyakaśipu. The use of ivory pricks for bridling horses by Indians is also referred to by Arrian.

The above are illustrative, though not exhaustive, of the varied uses of ivory in Ancient India. The remains of ancient ivory-carving are, however, very rare, probably because of the extreme fragility of the material and the disintegrating climate of the country. The lack of remains does not necessarily indicate that the art was not practised in the ancient times, since of such a practice we have abundant references in ancient literature, and of these, only a few have been mentioned above. Isolated finds of ivory-carvings of ancient date have been known also from various sites. An inscription on the south gate of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi proves the existence of a guild of ivory-carvers in the region of Vidiśā as early as the first century BC.

To the period under notice belong not a few specimens of elegant ivory-carving distinguished by the same classical tenor that we have described above. One eminent piece comes from Pitalkhora, a dainty statuette of a girl full of youthful charm and grace. The physiognomical treatment has the closest analogy to that of the donor figures at Karle. Though in small scale, the animated body has the same expansiveness controlled by a definitive contour, while the facial expression is illumined by the same open and straightforward look. In fragment though, an attitude of langourous ease pervades the form. In these respects the Pitalkhora ivory piece may be recognised to be a striking example of western Indian plastic concept in miniature.

Interesting specimens of Indian ivory-carver's art belonging to this phase have been discovered within the recent decades, not in India, but beyond her limits. Favourable climatic conditions have, perhaps, led to their preservation in these tracts. One such specimen has been recovered from among the ruins of Pompei in far-off Campania (Italy).[63] It was found in a corner of a colonnaded portico of a large private house in the famous city that was buried about the close of the first century AD by the eruption of the volcano. Under pressure of the debris it had been splintered into little fragments. These, put together and restored, make a charming little piece representing a female figure in the full bloom of youth and adorned with

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heavy and sumptuous jewellery and coiffure.* On either side appears a smaller female figure, repeating the type, features and costume of the central figure. Though in sharper and more rigid forms, these smaller figures, while producing a sense of primitiveness, have the effect of suppressing the daring sensuousness of the main figure. There is a circular hole drilled from the top of main figure through the axis to a depth of about the level of the loins, the aperture being perhaps intended for insertion of a metal pin to support either some sacred symbol, or more possibly, some object of practical utility like a mirror.

The central figure is shown nude or dressed in an extremely diaphanous robe and is seen standing with the legs crossed. The broad full face with wide open eyes and fleshy mouth with soft and full lips give an impression of happy sensuousness to which the full and almost spherical breasts lend an effect of triumphant physical beauty. The heavy hips glide down to the rounded legs in a flowing and rhythmical contour. The figure is two-handed, the left caressing the ear pendants and the right, turned behind the neck, touching the rich coiffure at the back. Complicated forms of jewellery adorn the figure. Particularly noteworthy are the sumptuous treatment of the hair enclosed in a series of ornamental festoons at the back, the large pin issuing horizontally from the head-dress, the heavy girdle and the rows of rings tightly clasping the lower legs and the fore-arms of the figure. The smaller figures flanking the central one are shown in the function of attendants holding caskets, perhaps containing cosmetics. The main figure may, hence, be described as that of a lady at her toilette.

The ivory piece with the charming, yet somewhat candid, sensuality of the female form may be recognised to be a typical product of ancient Indian art recalling the well known *yakshiṇī* figures from Mathurā. The types and forms of jewellery and the sumptuous coiffure are encountered also only in early Indian art. The subject, too, is quite familiar in India, analogous representations being frequently met with in the rail figures from Mathurā. In the freedom of pose and in the fullness of forms, the free and frankly sensuous Mathurā *yakshiṇīs* supply the nearest parallels of this little ivory

*1st ed., fig. 79.

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caryatid that seems to have travelled somehow from India to far-off Campania. The long journey of this product of pure Indian workmanship is part of the interesting story of the trade contacts that India had in those days with the Western world. The city of Pompei was buried under the ashes of the eruption of the Vesuvius in AD 79. Obviously, this ivory figurine has to be assigned to a date prior to that catastrophe. From the physiognomy and style it may be dated about the close of the first century BC or the beginning of the first century AD.

In ancient times Afghanistan was within the orbit of Indian culture. Lying on the direct route of various racial movements and migrations, this area witnessed interesting culture complexes, remains of which are being gradually laid bare in recent scientific explorations. Begram, to the north of Kabul, has been identified as the site of the ancient city of Kāpiśī (Kapiśā), frequently referred to in literature—Indian, Classical and Chinese—and in inscriptions and coins. For sometime the city might have been a secondary capital of the Kushāṇa empire. The French Archaeological Delegation, under the leadership of Mon. J. Hackin, carried on extensive explorations at this site and laid bare, among other things, a considerable number (a few hundreds) of small ivory plaques, probably representing the remains of jewel or toilet caskets of wooden frames.[64] The caskets have long crumbled to dust and the plaques, too, are in a state of decay and disintegration. These carved plaques of ivory are immensely varied in subject and treatment. Of special interest to us is a fairly large collection of Indian ivory works. The extremely delicate and sophisticated technique may indicate that the boxes of which these plaques were decorative embellishments were meant for aristocratic households.

Among the Indian ivory works from Begram a variety of idioms may be recognised. They range from pieces merely engraved in very shallow relief,* amounting almost to linear sketches, to real bas-relief and altorelievo sculptures.† Whatever the nature of the carving, all are characterised by bold, sure and precise outlines enclosing the carefully modelled bodies which seem to appear in the fullness of

*Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 51 A & B; 1st ed. fig. 78.
†1st ed., figs. 67 & 72.

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their volumes and depths. Some of the plaques with their sketch-like engravings, which emphasise, however, precise modelling, seem to recall the plastic tradition of Veṅgī of the pre-christian epoch. The figures and other details are engraved with deeply incised contours which, with an enveloping line of shadow, give relief to the forms and convey, in an ingenious manner, a feeling of roundness to the flattened figures with the help of the most subtle nuances of modelling. Such pieces appear to have been originally painted and in a few traces of colour still remain. Slightly deeper reliefs with the compositions teeming with figures in multitudinous attitudes and poses are reminiscent, again, of Veṅgī art of the early centuries of the Christian era. The slenderness of the forms and the manner of grouping may also be considered to have been allied to the Veṅgī tradition.

It is not with the South Indian classical idiom alone that the ivory plaques from Begram betray their affinity. An unmistakeable relationship with the classical trend of Mathurā is also evident in a large number of carvings. These show deeper cut reliefs in which the physical types, especially the female forms with their rounded volumes, bulging hips, attenuated waists and candid sensuousness, have their parallels only in the figure sculptures on the rail pillars of Mathurā. The subjects (elegant and intimate toilet scenes are the most preferred), poses and such accessories like the ornaments, the drapery, etc. are also characteristically of the Mathurā tradition. The decorative motifs, (fig. 55) such as lotus flowers, birds, winged monsters, bear distinctive marks of their derivation from Indian art, a fact which is also noticeable in the representation of architectnral elements on these plaques.*

These dainty little pieces of ivory from Begram exemplify a brilliant art tradition, bold and forceful in form and charming and graceful in execution. In a few plaques un-Indian costumes and decorative motifs may, perhaps, be recognised. But such incidences are very few. Formally and stylistically these ivory plaques belong to the domain of Indian art. They represent an art of extreme elegance and sophistication, an art depicting the worldly life with a joyous freshness and beautiful unconcern, exactly as we find in classical Indian art. The form, the style as well as the contents of the plaques

*1st ed., fig. 67.

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leave no doubt regarding the source of inspiration of this art. It is significant to find how Afghanistan, now outside the pale of the Indian subcontinent, supplies us with the most considerable remains of early Indian ivory-carving.

NOTES

[1] For such view see J.E. Van Lohuizen de Leeuw, *The Scythian Period*, pp. 235f. J. Rosenfeld (*The Dynastic Art of the Kushāns*, p. 106) refers to the difficulties in accepting this view. According to him 'a new Kushān era began at an undetermined time after the reign of Vāsudeva.'

[2] *Calcutta Review*, July, 1934; *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology for the year 1934* (Vol. IX), p. 10, pl. IIc. For doubts regarding the reading of the date see *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. X, pp. 575f.

[3] *ASR.*, 1904-05, pp. 78-80; also *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. VIII, p. 175.

[4] *JASB.*, Vol. LXVII, p. 274; also *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. VIII, p. 180.

[5] L. Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, Vol. II, pl. 80.

[6] Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, p· 90, pl. 49A.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 90, pl. 49B.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *ASR.*, 1922-23, p. 90, pl. V. 2.

[13] A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 37, fig. 71.

[14] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 89, pl. 48A & 48B.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[16] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, p. 201, pl. 37.

[17] An admirable summary of all available data with regard to the chronology of the Gandhāra school has been given by Bachhofer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 73.

[18] A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[20] L. Bachhofer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 99.

[21] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 40.

[22] L. Bachhofer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 114.

[23] Benjamin Roland, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89, pls. 32 & 47.

[24] H.H. Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua* (London, 1841), p. 71. Benjamin Rowland (*op.*

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cit., pp. 78-79) ignores, however, this circumstantial evidence and argues that the reliquary cannot be dated earlier than the third century AD on the basis of the style of the "cusped niches" enclosing the figures of the Buddha. It is to be noted, however, that arches of identical design appear in Indian art much earlier (second century BC); when divested of wooden association, they would look closely similar to the arched niches of the Bimaran reliquary. The late Classical parallels in the West may not be as relevant in the context of chronology as has been suggested.

[25] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 78, pl. 38A.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

[27] *ASR.*, 1903-04, pp. 254 f.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 260.

[31] *Ibid.*, pl. 35.

[32] L. Bachhofer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 87.

[33] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[35] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 44.

[36] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[37] R.E.M. Wheeler, *Ancient India*, July 1946, pp. 17-125.

[38] James Burgess, *Buddhist Stupas at Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta in the Kistna district, Madras Presidency* (London, 1887).

[39] A.H. Longhurst, Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjunikonda (*MASI.*, No. 64, 1938).

[40] *ASR.*, 1926-27, p. 150, pls. XXXV, XXXVI.

[41] T.N. Ramachandran, Buddhist Sculptures from a Stupa near Goli village (*Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum*, 1929).

[42] Douglas Barrett in his *Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum* (London, 1954) has suggested a new chronology of the Amarāvatī sculptures. He is inclined to assign all the sculptures from Amarāvatī to the period from the second to the fourth century AD and denies thereby an earlier phase in the development of Amarāvatī art.

[43] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 211.

[44] James Burgess, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 61, 100.

[45] K.R. Subramanian, *Buddhist Remains in Andhradeśa* (Madras, 1932), pp. 53-63.

[46] L. Bachhofer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 58.

[47] R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. II, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 525.

[48] L. Bachhofer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 55.

[49] A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

[50] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 47.

[51] L. Bachhofer *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 55.

[52] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 49.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

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[54] L. Bachhofer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 59.
[55] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 49.
[56] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 117, pl. 72.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[59] A.K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 342.
[60] *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology*, Vol. VIII, 1933, pl. viii.
[61] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
[62] R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 526.
[63] *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology*, Vol. XIII, 1938, pp. 1-5.

The statuettee was discovered by Professor Amadeo Maiuri, Superintendent of the Antiquities of Campania and Director of the National Museum of Pompei and Ercolano. Professor Maiuri at once recognised it as a work of Indian art, and published an article entitled 'Statuetta eburnea di arte Indiana a Pompei' in *Le Arti*, Anno I, fasc. II, pp. 111-15.

[64] *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology*, Vol. XII, 1937, pp. 30-33.

The discovery was made by Madame Hackin. The official account of the excavations may be seen in J. Hackin, *Recherches Archaeologiques a Begram* (Paris, 1939). See also Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

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5

TERRACOTTA

Earth or clay has been regarded as the primeval plastic material not only because of its ready availability, but also on account of its easy tractability. It is the passive, *i.e.* the least-resisting, material that lends itself to shape very easily. It satisfies thus the creative impulse of the ordinary man, as much for aesthetic expression as for domestic and ritualistic needs. A more or less durable form is imparted to productions in clay, either by hardening through exposure in the sun or by firing. Burnt clay or terracotta has thus served as an easy and convenient plastic material from time immemorial.

Plastic practices in India appear to have started with the terracotta figurines of the peasant cultures of Kulli and Zhob. An abundant production in terracotta is also encountered in the urban culture of the Harappan phase. These terracotta figurines and their plastic import have already been discussed in Chapter I. The products reveal a primitive technique and may be considered as expressions of a plastic style already in a process of formation. In spite of the rude and primitive technique, an approximate sequence indicating a formative style may be ascertained in the objects of the different cultures. A gradually increasing sense of modelling and elaboration and the attempt to render greater ease and freedom of attitudes and poses, recognised in terracotta figurines of the Harrappa culture, exemplify a style trying to rid itself from the limitations of the primitive technique and conventions.

Beside the stone and bronze sculptures, the terracotta art in the urban Harappan culture seems to have represented a popular plastic idiom of the common man having connections with the terracotta tradition of the peasant cultures. This idiom seems to have continued

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in the succeeding phases and terracotta remained one of the most favourite mediums of artistic expression for the commoner people. This is evident from the fairly enormous mass of terracotta figurines that have been discovered in ancient sites throughout the Indian subcontinent, particularly in the riverine basins. Unfortunately, proper records and data with regard to stratigraphical evidence of such finds are extremely meagre, if not lacking altogether. Again, many of the significaat terracotta figurines, relevant to a study of this art, represent accidental finds and no accurate data with regard to the stratigraphy of the finds are available. What is required is an assortment, on the evidence of stratigraphy, of the numerous terracotta objects found in course of a scientific excavation of an ancient site. It is a good sign that the Archaeological Survey of the Government of India are devoting greater attention to the proper recording of stratigraphical evidence, and when this is done one may, perhaps, expect to classify scientifically the numeraus terracotta finds from the ancient sites. Their sequence may enable one to determine the evolution of Indian terracotta style in general, and on this basis an evolutionary sequence also of the finds in the different regions. In the present state of our knowledge the absence of such scientific evidence is being keenly felt.

To a scientific observer it may appear that a complete and comprehensive charting of the terracotta finds on the evidence of stratigraphy is expected to determine satisfactorily a sequence of the vast mass of Indian terracotta figurines from the different sites. There are, however, serious difficulties in this process. The recording of stratigraphical evidence in the earlier excavations had been perfunctory and arbitrary to a certain degree. In view of our actual experience, stratigraphical evidence, even if correctly recorded, can be expected to furnish little data in regard to the date of a particular object. As it now is, there are evidences of objects, apparently belonging to different dates, being found in the same level of occupation, or of a later piece being recorded from a level lower than that of a find of an earlier date. There might be various reasons for such circumstances. A tiny piece, as the terracotta objects usually are, is likely to be disturbed from its original level due to some confusion underground, either by some actions of man or of nature. It was the practice, again, to preserve such objects in households even for centuries before being

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discarded when damaged. It is not unlikely, hence, that objects of different periods should be found accumulated in the same pit. It is because of such circumstances that Kramrisch significantly observes, "there is no such thing as far as terracottas are concerned as a Maurya level, etc."[1] In spite of all these, one cannot, without a due consideration, brush aside stratigraphical evidence which may be found helpful for a general scheme of classification. But that should wait till complete and comprehensive scientific data are accumulated. The evidence of terracotta technique and its gradual advance may, under the circumstances, be utilised for a clue to an approximate sequence of terracotta objects. It may be found possible, perhaps, to establish a course of evolution of terracotta art on this basis. But here, too some caution need be used, as will be indicated later on. The affinity of a terracotta form with that of the plastic style in stone of known date may also offer a certain clue to the relative age of a particular object.

The importance of terracotta as a medium of artistic expression in the proto-historic Indus civilisations has already been indicated. The terracotta art seems to have been a popular and favourite idiom in the historic phases also. Beside the monumental works in stone, the terracotta objects of the historic phases may appear to be slight and tiny. But what they lack in size is amply compensated for by the more abundant productions which indicate a more extensive and popular idiom of plastic expression. A variety of significant motifs and forms may be found in terracotta. Its use was also extensive and purposes varied. Objects and artifacts in terracotta were intended chiefly for domestic use and worship, for household decorations, for children's toys, for popular religious and magical practices. Seals were made out of that material for purposes of documentation and such seals bear in their engravings the impress of an artistic impulse of the people. The poor and the humble folk satisfied their craving for personal decoration by fashioning delightful ornaments in clay and terracotta. In brick buildings terracotta served as the most suitable and convenient material for decorating and diversifying the exterior walls, not only by variegated mouldings of different shapes and patterns, but also by continuous friezes and dados of plaques. Apart from aesthetic significance and import, the terracotta art in its varied uses and applications, supply invaluable data for a study of the life and culture of the people.

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It is proposed to confine our attention here to a discussion of the terracotta art of India of the period collectively covered by the three previous chapters. A study of Indian terracottas leads to their division into two broad and well-defined groups—one indicating a primitive form and experience and the other showing the impress and formulations of a stylistic advance natural to a progressive art movement in a chronological sequence. In form and technique the former differs but little from the terracotta figurines of the proto-historic Indus civilisations. What is further interesting is the fact that the primitive type has been found in association with the other, and that terracotta objects of the primitive type are also being fashioned out by the rural people even in the present day. An eminent scholar, hence, describes this type as "ageless" in distinction to the other which is designated as the "timed variation".[2] The products of the ageless type seem to be as important as those of the timed variation for a comprehensive study of terracotta art. It should, however, be emphasised at the outset that in the absence of any proper mode of chronological or stylistic grouping it would be rather a hazardous task to impute any chronology to the products of the ageless type, except in a few instances where the evidence of fashions in dress and ornaments might furnish a clue to their relative chronological position.

The ageless type, whether representing a human figure or an animal, is characterised by a modelling that reduces the form to a simple description of the main volumes of the figure corresponding to the principal parts of the body, such as the head, the torso and the hands and the legs. The human figures are fashioned entirely by hand by means of such rough and ready devices as flattening and rounding the body, pinching up and pressing down soft clay according to the requirements of the form, and drawing the ends of the limbs into conical points—all done by the simple pressure of the fingers. Eyes, lips, ears, navel, hair, etc. are indicated either by mere scratches or incisions, or by strips and pellets separately fashioned and applied on the summarily modelled form. The *appliqué* technique is also employed for delineating ornaments and head-dresses, and usually the form is burdened with them. Most of the human figurines represent females with heavy and bulging hips and prominent rounded breasts, sometimes with the navel and abdomen clearly marked. They seem to be associated with the primitive conception of a mother or

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fertility goddess or both.

The animal figurines of this group represent mostly horse, elephant and ram and, like the human figures, were fashioned by the hand. The modelling is reduced to cylinders, cones and kindred geometrical shapes representing their bodies and limbs. Like the human figurines, again, ornaments, trappings, etc. and also such features as the ears, manes (in case of the horse) and horns (in case of the ram) were separately fashioned and applied. Clay and terracotta figures of horses and elephants were often offered to village deities, as they are even today, and the practice seems to have been wide-spread throughout the country. There is a plausibility also in the suggestion of Kramrisch that such animal figurines were intended as mounts *(vāhanas)* of the divinities, and that such figures in early Indian art might stand as the symbols of the deities concerned.

The terracotta figurines of the ageless type, it has already been observed, were made entirely by hand. The form and technique differ very little from those witnessed in the terracotta human and animal figurines of the Indus civilisations. The description above applies to those objects of the ageless group that may be assigned to the period under notice because of their associations.

With the time-bound group the mould comes into use. Nearly every ancient site in the Indian subcontinent has yielded a very considerable number of terracotta objects of varied shapes and forms. They constitute, perhaps, only a small fraction of the total production in this medium. The most important centres yielding abundant productions were Takshaśilā (Taxila) in the Punjab; Mathurā, Śrāvastī (Saheth-Maheth), Ahichchhatrā, Kauśāmbī (Kosam), Bhita, Rajghat in Uttar Pradesh; Padmāvatī (Pawaya) in Gwalior (Madhyā Pradesh); *Pāṭaliputra* (Patna), Buxar, Vaiśālī (Basarh) in Bihar; and Tāmralipti (Tamluk), Berachampa, Harinarayanpur, etc. in West Bengal; Mahasthan and a few other sites in Bangla Desh. Besides, stray and sporadic finds are also recorded from several other places. The artistic movement in terracotta thus seems to have been extensive and widespread throughout the Northern Indian subcontinent. In the South also the terracotta tradition comes into view as a result of the recent excavations in Andhra Pradesh. The terrain in the South, however, was not suitable enough for an extensive plastic practice in the medium of clay and terracotta.

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The fairly large number of objects, discovered up till now, indicates a wide range of probabilities within the time-bound group. It is possible to discern certain local features with regard to objects of each site. Kramrisch recognises particularly three distinct types in the objects found respectively at Patna, Buxar and Mathurā, the terracottas from other sites representing, according to her, local variations and adaptations of the types from the above three sites.[3] The three types, however, do not appear to be separated and isolated from one another. A certain general resemblance in respect of head-dresses, hair styles and ornaments and a general affinity in the mode of execution seem to suggest points of contact that connect the activities in the various sites as belonging to one common artistic movement. The variations that are noticed are not of such a strong character as to suggest their division into definite and well-marked types.

The earliest in the time-bound series of Indian terracottas appear to be those in which the faces are found to be impressed from moulds with the hair, head-dress, and even the ears separately made and added. The heads, thus produced, were affixed to the bodies modelled by the hand exactly in the process that we have noticed in the figurines of the ageless group. The drapery and ornaments are also separately made and applied on the body. The additive mode of figure composition, so tenacious in the ageless type, seems to have been the predominant technique also in this group, only the face and, to a certain extent, the accessories showing such traits and characteristics that might suggest clues as to their relative chronology. The additive technique in terracotta art, it should be emphasised, has been the most persistent and figurines with moulded faces and modelled bodies are known to have continued in all phases of terracotta art, even up the present day.[4]

Complete figures of the early historic phases of Indian terracotta art are extremely meagre. Of the few nearly complete figurines, two from Mathurā seem to be highly interesting in this context. Both represent female figurines, each in a strictly flattened and frontal aspect, with the attributes of fecundity highly emphasised, as we find in the extremely exaggerated pelvis and full, rounded breasts. The navel, in each case, is deeply marked. One of them,[5] now in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, is complete except for the hands

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which are broken away. This figure is burdened with a cumbersome array of ornaments and jewellery. On the head appear beaded discs of ornaments from which tassels appear to be hanging down. From each ear hang two heavy rings, while the neck is adorned with a heavy collar. On the body there appear wavy strips in the lower part which may indicate a drapery in folds or some kind of ornament the nature and character of which are difficult to ascertain. The hips are encircled by a heavy girdle *(mekhalā)* and the lower legs by a pair of anklets. The legs are stumpy in appearance and make almost a parabolic curve at the upper end. The head is impressed from a mould and has wide open eyes, broad nose and wide mouth with a slightly fleshy lower lip. The body is entirely modelled by the hand and the ornaments are all separately fashioned and applied. The other figure,[6] now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (U.S.A.), is also nearly complete, but for the lower portion of the right leg and the left hand which are now missing. In technique as well as in conception this latter figure is evidently allied to the former; only there is a lesser array of ornaments which enables one to appreciate the modelled form more convincingly. The modelling appears to be more delicate and sensitive, and the stumpy shape of legs and the longish conical appearance of the hands, both with fingers unmarked, stand in definite contrast to the soft shadows playing all over the torso. Kramrisch is inclined to place the former figure to about 200 BC or slightly earlier, while Coomaraswamy assigns the latter to the pre-Maurya age on the alleged affinity of this figure to that engraved in *repoussé* on the gold plaque from Lauriya Nandangarh.[7] The two figurines, however, seem to be much too allied to be differentiated by a wide gap of time. The probability of a pre-Maurya date cannot, again, be entirely ruled out.

The terracotta figurines of Maurya date, as may be ascertained from those assigned to that age, appear to be characterised by remarkably individual traits in respect of physiognomy as well as of expression. Their very individuality marks them as forming a distinct class by themselves, as significant as the sculptural art in stone of this epoch; it may be argued, however, that their ascription to the Mauryan epoch may not always be founded on absolutely sure grounds. In respect of size, again, such terracotta figures also stand out from the majority of Indian terracottas which are usually in

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miniature. A few of these terracottas, namely a standing female figurine and two detached heads, have been found from the site of Bulandi Bagh (Patna) "in the dark blue soil enveloping the ancient wooden rampart" of the Mauryan city.[8] Another female figurine has also been recovered from the same site and level in a later excavation.[9] The association of these terracotta figurines from Bulandi Bagh with the Maurya age thus appears to be convincing. Many of these terracottas, again, have been discovered at Patna, *i.e.* Pāṭaliputra, the imperial metropolis of the Mauryas, a fact that may lend some conviction to their assignment to the Mauryan age.

The two standing female figurines from Bulandi Bagh appear to belong to the same conception. In spite of a frontal treatment, each represents a complete figure in the round. But for the faces which are pressed from the moulds, the figures are modelled by the hand. The first seems to have been built up in separate parts and put together before firing. The figure wears an elaborate array of heavy apparel with fluttering hoops in the front and at the sides. Over the head appears the rich bicornate head-dress composed of manifold elements. In spite of the rigid post-shaped legs, the position of the hands (the left unfortunately broken away) may indicate an attitude of dance. The second female figurine from Bulandi Bagh, comparatively free of the heavy garments and ornaments, shows a slender and disciplined body with the most subtle and sensitive modelling. The thinned garment, clinging fast to the body, has an almost diaphanous effect. The elongated limbs add to the delicate appearance of the figure which seems to have been a refined version of the conception noticed in the previous specimen.

Of the two detached heads from Bulandi Bagh, the one with the bicornate head-dress[10] seems to have been related to the above female figurines in facial physiognomy. The other head, that of a boy,[11] has, however a strongly marked individuality in its happy and radiant expression. Coomaraswamy describes the latter as "one of the most sensitive and skilful productions of Indian art at any period." The youthful figure of a seated *yogin*, discovered by Jayaswal from the site of Bhiknapahari,[12] has a perfectly refined treatment and modelling along with a glowing countenance. The ornament of beads, the *ūrdhva-liṅga*, and what appears to be a snake hood over the head may associate the figure with the conception of the great god Śiva. The

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treatment and expression may indicate a date in the Maurya period, though Jayaswal is inclined to class it as pre-Maurya. The two vase-shaped male figurines, also from the same site,[13] exhibit, again, a high degree of individualised expression which, coupled with their provenance, may connect them with Mauryan terracotta art. Reference may be made also to two other detached heads belonging, in all possibility, to this phase. One is that of a male from the site of Golakhpur and the other that of a female from Bhiknapahari,[14]. Superb in modelling, each bears the touch of a master craftsman's hand. The shaven head of the male with drooping eyelids has a calm and pensive mood, while the female with her full cheeks, rounded chin and soft fleshy lips has all the graces of a youthful feminine face What connects the above examples together is an individualised ex pression imparted to each. Such individualised treatments are difficult to be met with in any other phase of Indian terracotta art.

The remarkable torso of a female figurine from near Golakhpur,[15] seems to be an outstanding production. Conceived entirely in the round, the figure with its soft and rounded volumes has a delicate and perfect modelling, front, back and sides all included. As is usual in other terracotta figurines, ageless as well as time-bound, we have in this example a youthful type in the full bloom of femininity, with large and globular breasts with the nipples indicated and an appearance of a slight droop because of their weight, distended abdomen, heavy hips and buttocks and soft contours suggesting a sensitive warmth of flesh. Profuse ornaments which seem to be separately fashioned and applied, bedeck the figure. A jewelled belly-band and a girdle of four strings of beads of different shapes, passing just below the buttocks at the back, add to the ornate effect of the youthful person. A double-string-ed ornament of beads passes diagonally across the body from the left shoulder and is drawn up at the back at the right hip. From it frills and tassels appear to hang down along the left side of the torso cover-ing partly the jewelled girdle in front. Or, this last may represent part of an upper garment that resembles a frilled gown. From the waist hangs down a close-fitting drapery following the contours of the thighs and with frill shown in front. Kramrisch,[16] assigns this terracotta figure to the family of the *yakshiṇī* statue from Didarganj *(ante.* p. 57*)*. But the form and modelling of the terracotta, though seemingly of the same conception, appear to indicate a date for it anterior to that of

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the *yakshiṇī* sculpture from Didarganj. Jayaswal, from the level of its discovery, would assign the terracotta piece to the early Maurya epoch. The level, it has been observed above, cannot always be relied upon; but a date in the late Maurya or early Śuṅga times for this figurine might not seem improbable altogether.

With regard to Indian terracottas the problem of chronology, for reasons already stated, is a much controversial one, and differences of opinion are, not unoften, considerable. Scholars generally hold that terracotta figures with modelled bodies and moulded faces and with jewellery and apparel affixed were characteristic of the Maurya terracotta art. This view gains some plausibility from the above terracotta figurines, found in definite Maurya context, that bear the distinct impress of the aforesaid technique. Objects of similar conception have been discovered also as a result of accidental diggings in the ancient city of Pāṭaliputra and there is a tendency to date them all in the Maurya period, though beyond the technique there is no other evidence to support the ascription. It has to be borne in mind that this technique continued to be employed in the Śuṅga period when moulded plaques became characteristic of terracotta art. The most significant terracotta figurines that might have some definite association with the Maurya epoch have been discussed above.

The terracotta figurines from Buxar (Shahabad district, Bihar),[17] bearing certain definite and individual characteristics in headgear and ornaments do not seem to have been earlier than the varied productions of the Śuṅga period, in spite of the early date assigned to them on account of the great depth at which they have been found. The delicate touches in their facial treatment appear to associate them generally with the Śuṅga idiom. The two heads, one of a female from Kosam and the other of a male from Mathurā,[18] may also be ascribed to the Śuṅga phase, though certain scholars are inclined to class them with the Maurya.

Before passing on to the Śuṅga terracottas it will be profitable to refer to two significant terracotta figurines which appear to be related to the Mauryan conception, though there is hardly any other evidence to assign them to the Maurya epoch. Both of them represent standing female forms and are nearly complete. One of them hails from Tamluk (Midnapur district, West Bengal). Tamluk represents the site of the ancient seaport city of Tāmralipti and is recently proved to

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have been an active centre of early terracotta art. Innumerable terracotta figurines have been found at this site, often in association with uninscribed cast coins of copper, and hence an early date for these productions can easily be inferred. In the terracotta figurine under examination,[19] the face appears to have been pressed from a mould and affixed to the separately modelled body. The left hand is *akimbo* and the right is stretched along the side in a curve parallel to the drapery which spreads out about the waist. The drapery is composed of *appliqué* plaques and consists of a hooped skirt, held by a belt, and a scarf. The lower part of the figure including the legs is broken. The ornaments are heavy and in *appliqué*. Conspicuous among these are a neck collar, knobbed ear ornaments, a headgear (partially preserved) and bracelets of round discs. The hair is parted in the middle above the forehead and is arranged in two hoops on the sides. There is a lesser number of ornaments than in figurines of this type, and this fact enables one to determine clearly the essentials of its modelling and composition. The head is delicately modelled with soft and subdued shadows adding charm to the full and rounded face. The bust, likewise, is perfect in modelling and such qualities of modelling are enhanced by the contrast presented by the primitive technique of *appliqué* plaques for garment and jewellery. This terracotta figurine from Tamluk shows a clear affinity with the two standing female figurines from Bulandi Bagh (Patna), mentioned above *(ante.* p. 108*)*, and may be classed with them chronologically as well as stylistically. The other figurine is a chance find from Pokharna (Bankura district, West Bengal)[20] and resembles essentially the Tamluk specimen in technique, style as well as in form, though lacking in finish, perhaps due to its extreme corrosion. The execution also seems to be on an inferior level. In conception, however, the Pokharna figurine, now in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, appears to be related to the Tamluk and Bulandi Bagh specimens, but belongs, possibly, to a later date.

The terracottas with moulded faces and modelled bodies are followed by miniature plaques, each bearing a figure or figures in relief, entirely produced from moulds and then touched up and finished before firing. Such plaques have come up from various ancient sites af the Indian subcontinent in fairly abundant numbers, and on these plaques appear mostly the representations of the female

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form, either singly or in association with other figures and objects. A large proportion of these terracotta plaques may be assigned to the Śuṅga-Kāṇva period, roughly second and first centuries BC. In this group also a chronological and stylistic sequence may be determined on the basis of advancement in plastic diction. The earlier ones, as in the contemporary plastic movement in stone, are characterised by flattened reliefs, heavy forms and harsh linear schemes. Soon they give place to pleasing specimens in which the reliefs are higher, the forms more refined and more sensitively modelled, the lines more disciplined and fluid, and the contours and gradation of planes better regulated. As a rule, the figures are heavily coiffured and wear elaborate apparel and jewellery concealing, to a certain extent, the loveliness of the delicately modelled body. The types are considerably varied, and in the abundant terracottas of this group with their variegated modes of coiffure, dress and jewellery one may find ample materials for a study of the fashions and tastes of the time.

In this general study of Indian sculpture it is not possible to refer even to the principal types of this group of terracottas. It is proposed, hence, to confine our attention to a significant example or two as epitomising the qualities and characteristics of Śuṅga-Kāṇva terracotta art. Kosam, the site of the ancient city of Kauśāmbī, among other places, had been an important centre of early Indian terracotta art. Mention may be made here of a female figurine from Kosam[21] as a characteristic example of terracotta art of this phase. This figurine wears elaborate adornments consisting of jewelled and beaded ornaments of various shapes and designs. The treatment of the coiffure is elaborate, decked as it is with strings of beads, jewelled bands and a turban-like roll on the left side of the head. The ears have heavy pendants and the neck is adorned with a tight-fitting collar and a beaded chain of several strings. In the fore-arm may be seen a few pairs of bracelets, while a girdle of several strings passes round the waist. Except for the ornaments, the upper part of the body is shown bare; from the waist downward hangs an extremely thin drapery which, instead of concealing, reveals the delicate contours of the thighs and the legs. The sensitive modelling of the face and of the bust is also noteworthy. The hands seem to be joined in front just below the breasts. The left leg is bent and from the attitude the figurine seems to represent a graceful female danseuse.

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Mention has already been made of Tamluk as an active centre of ancient terracotta art. Finds of early terracottas from this place have occasionally been recorded since a long time, and such finds have been substantially large within the recent date. Though mostly in fragments, a few of them may prove to be of considerable interest. Among the Tamluk terracottas of this phase mention should particularly be made of an almost complete plaque (Fig. 54), the like of which is seldom to be found in the entire range of Indian terracotta art. It is now deposited in the Indian Institute of Oxford (U.K.). It represents a discovery made long ago and had been lying forgotten for more than half a century. When it was again brought to the notice of scholars a wrong inference was made in respect of its findspot.[22] It may be found useful, hence, to discuss this interesting object in greater detail.

The plaque was found in four fragments, and these fragments, fitted together, make it nearly complete and show a female figure with the feet and ankles broken away. It is a highly ornate specimen in which the figure is overloaded with elaborate jewellery, rich apparel and a highly sophisticated coiffure also bejewelled. It is remarkably well preserved and the surface is very little worn or corroded. The entire plaque was evidently produced from a mould and was later on touched up and finished with a scraper or knife. The ornamental details were made with stamps and were carefully finished afterwards. The relief is full, although the face, because of the exuberance of ornaments and coiffure, appears rather flattened.

A large variety of ornaments and decorative motifs was employed in this highly interesting terracotta plaque. The background is found to be stamped over with numerous twelve-pointed and six-pointed rosaces. Apart from this ornament of the background, the figure itself wears elaborate burdens of coiffure and jewellery, and it may be found worth while to quote from the excellent description of Professor Johnston.[23]

"The head-dress is elaborate; the hair itself seems to be enclosed in a close-fitting bonnet (or fillet), bordered with four rows of beads and terminating in two flower tassels, the frontal hair being just visible.[24] . . . . On each side of the bonnet are two turban-like rolls of cloth, each bound with a belt and highly ornate. The left-hand one, which is the larger in accordance with the usual practice of this class

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of figure, is made up of five vertical strips with dependent tassels or strings of beads at regular intervals, while the right-hand one appears to be a single piece, embellished with six rows of flower ornament between which are strings of beads. Stuck into the latter are five emblems. . . . . Their exact identification would perhaps help us to guess whom the figure represents. The lowest is an *aṅkuśa* . . . . and the middle one an axe. The two on each side of the latter are of the *triśūla* shape, familiar to us from Sanchi and other sites, the lower one being surmounted by a crown and the upper by a triangular piece; possibly they are two types of *vajra*, . . . The top emblem might be a flag, a *dhvaja* . . . or some kind of chopper. Each of the five has a string of six beads hanging from the top. Emblems of this type are frequently referred to in literature, though often difficult to identify on the monuments. A terracotta plaque, recently found at Kosam and now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, shows the same series and presumably represented the same goddess; it is in a much poorer condition and less complete than our figure. On the north gate of Sanchi there are to be seen two bracelets of similar symbols. . . . These two series include the *aṅkuśa* and *vajra*, but give no help towards the identification of the other emblems. Between the masses of the turban rises a crown with five rows of star-shaped ornaments, presumably a jewelled cap containing the hair. A similar, but larger, crown occurs several times on the Śuṅga railing at Bodhgaya, and the head-dresses of the same general type are not uncommon in the art of the Śuṅga period, both sculpture and terracotta. The ears have two large circular highly decorated rolls, that in the right ear being shown side view, and the other one frontally; from each hang a number of tassels or strings of beads. These rolls again are familiar as was known from many recently discovered terracottas. Round the neck is a heavy necklace, the details of which are rather worn and unimportant."

The dress is also elaborately represented and according to Professor Johnston admits of two possible interpretations. It appears to consist either of a sleeveless tunic, fastened to the waist by a girdle and reaching down to the knees with an under-skirt that extends nearly to the ankles, or of a single garment with flounces. The former alternative seems to be a correct description of the dress worn by the figure. The dress passes over the left shoulder, but leaves the right

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shoulder bare. A narrow border is indicated in the top part of the dress. Close-set shallow lines, apparently made by a comb-like implement, indicate the folds. At the bottom appear two series of bead strings ending in tassels. In the upper part of the strings may be seen four paunchy figures, two on each thigh, squatting on haunches and with the hands raised to the heads. Similar figures are also found to appear in the same positions on a terracotta figure, said to have been collected from Kauśāmbī (Kosam) and once in the Ow-Wachendorf collection. Around the hips is a girdle in three rows, the upper and lower of gadrooned beads and the central one of small circular medallions. The girdle seems to be held in position by the hands and possibly with a fastening or support indicated by a small flat object above the top row in the centre. Professor Johnston thinks it rather curious that such a girdle should be worn above the drapery; but this practice appears to have been widely in vogue, as is apparent from the evidence supplied by contemporary terrocotta figurines and by stone statuary as well. The underskirt which reaches down to the ankles has also close-set shallow lines indicative of the folds. Besides, a broad ribbon passes over the right shoulder and round the left hip, like a bandolier, with four figures, possibly intended as amulets. Professor Johnston describes them as a pair of fish, a bird (with the head broken) a sleeping doe and a *makara*. Bead strings are suspended to the ribbon and the amulets. One or more scarves are shown passing over the right and left upper arms and terminating on a level with the knees. The upper arms are bare, but the lower arms have each four heavy bracelets.

The general affinity of this plaque with the Indian Museum and Ow-Wachendorf specimens, said to have been recovered from Kauśāmbī, led Professor Johnston and, following him, other scholars to suggest that this remarkable piece hailed also from the same site. Our detailed discussion regarding the discovery and findspot of this piece proves this suggestion to be a mere assumption, and there seems to be no doubt any longer that this outstanding terracotta figure originally came from Tamluk, the famous Tāmralipti of the ancient days. Among the recent Tamluk finds, now in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, there may be recognised at least two fragments which are closely identical to the piece under examination in all important details. From Harinarayanpur and Berachampa

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(Twenty-four Perganas district, West Bengal) have been recovered closely allied terracotta figurines.[25] The type appears to have been characteristic of lower Bengal, and if a suggestion may be hazarded we would like to say that the Indian Museum and the Ow-Wachendorf examples also probably hailed from some site or sites in lower Bengal. From associated objects and from the indications, noted above, the Tamluk figurine appears to be dated in the second century BC.

With regard to the identification of this remarkable terracotta figurine divergent views are held. Such views are, more or less, tentative, and no definite conclusion is possible on this point in the present state of our knowledge. From the emblems worn as crests Professor Kramrisch decribes the figure as representing the *apsaras* Pañchachūḍā said to have been produced in the churning of the ocean, as we find in the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Purāṇas*. Professor Johnston, however, summarily rejects this view with the observation that the figures of *apsaras* should be shown as nude, whereas the lady represented in this fiigurine wears elaborate drapery. He discusses at length the question of interpretation. From the analogy of the bandolier with amulets, found in several objects with votive significance from the Near East, he thinks that this figure might also have a similar significance. "It looks" he says, "as if we are dealing with the cult of a mother goddess which, we know, was wide spread over the Near East, and indeed over most of the then known world at this time, and which seems to have prevailed in India from time immemorial, to judge from archaeological evidence available in the last twenty years." He cites a reference to a goddess, called Māyā, in the *Saundarananda Kāvya* of Aśvaghosha. He significantly points out further the mention of an Indian Mother Goddess, Maiya, in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus, No. 1280, where this goddess is invoked as bringing flood in the Ganges. The goddess, referred to as Maiya in the Papyrus, appears to be the same as Māyā of Aśvaghosha, and from the description of the Papyrus she is known to have been worshipped in the Gangetic basin as a goddess associated especially with rain and fertility. Though he was not quite definite in this interpretation, Professor Johnston thinks that "such an identification meets the requirements of the case, and that, if it is the wrong answer, the right one, when found, will be of similar character." These observations of Professor Johnston seem to be quite apposite in view of the popularity of this type of goddess in

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the lower Gangetic basin, as we have shown above. Might this figurine represent an early arche-type of the river goddess Gaṅgā of the later days?

Among the varied and considerable remains of terracotta art of this phase mention may be made of one other interesting plaque from Basarh (ancient Vaiśālī) bearing the representation of a winged goddess.[26] The goddess stands, facing, on a lotus (which, according to Coomaraswamy, is one of the earliest examples of lotus pedestal in Indian art) in rigid *samapada-sthānaka* attitude. She is flanked on two sides by two lotus stalks with buds and blossoms. The arms are held *akimbo*, while two wings are shown on the shoulders. A profusion of ornaments bedecks the figure, and among these, the pearl-fringed bracelets are worth noticing. Coomaraswamy assigns the plaque to the Maurya or a slightly earlier date. The plaque is entirely moulded and the technique and general style cannot be ascribed to a date earlier than the Śuṅga period. A fragmentary terracotta of this type has also been discovered from the same site.[27] Further, the popularity of the motif in the art of this phase is evidenced in two other fragmentary terracottas, each bearing the representation of a winged female, discovered within the last few years, one from Tamluk and the other from Kauśāmbi.[28] Later representations of the winged goddess may be seen in a bronze plaque from Akhun Dheri, possibly of Kushāṇa date and in stone relief of a similar date from Mathurā.[29] In this it is interesting to observe that a complete terracotta mould bearing the representation of a winged male figure in identical pose and setting as in the Basarh example has been discovered from Tamluk,while another fragmentary terracotta plaque from Harinarayanpur (Twenty-four Perganas district, West Bengal) shows the upper part of a similar male figure.[30] They are now deposited in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University. Stylistically both of them are to be assigned to the Śuṅga-Kāṇva epoch. It is to be noted that the winged male and female figures, shown on all these examples, appear each in an identical setting and it is not unreasonable to presume that a significant relation exists between the two motifs. Apparently they appear to represent the male and female counterparts of the same divine concept.

The subject matter of the terracotta plaques of the period is no less varied. The individual figurines represent mostly *yakshiṇis* and,

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sometimes also, *yakshas*. Representations of one or other divine concept are also not rare. Apart from individual figurines, *mithuna* plaques are not uncommon, again. There are narrative reliefs also and, among these, there may be recognised faint echoes of *Jātaka* and other stories. In case of the narrative reliefs it is not always possible to identify the story depicted because of the fragmentary condition of the plaques. It is also possible that a complete story was represented, as in the later brick temples, in a series of plaques; no identification is possible, hence, unless the missing ones of a particular series are available. In terracotta art the story of Udayana and Vāsavadattā seems to have been fairly popular and several representations of this theme have been found in a number of sites. A fragmentary plaque, recovered from Mahasthan (Bogra district, Bangla Desh),[31] depicts perhaps the scene of Dushyanta's hunt near Kaṇva's hermitage which eventually led to the king's romance with Śakuntalā, the foster daughter of the sage. A description of even the principal themes depicted in Śuṅga-Kāṇva terracotta art is beyond the scope of the present volume. In view of the varied nature of the themes and contents the vast mass of terracotta plaques of the period deserve a fuller and more comprehensive study.

The terracotta plaques of this period, it has already been observed, were cast from moulds. In a few instances the ancient moulds have survived. Sometimes the mould and its ancient impression have been found together. Again, terracotta figurines found at a particular site are seen to be identical in size and form, in stance and bearing, in ornaments and drapery. Such instances are not a few, and the pieces appear to have been produced from the same mould or moulds. This, along with the fact of the survival of the ancient moulds through all these centuries, may indicate that such moulds were prepared not for a single casting only, but for many, and were preserved for future use. The actual age of a terracotta piece cast from such a mould may not, hence, always correspond to that indicated by the general style.

In the Śaka-Kushāṇa phase artistic activities in terracotta seem to be as abundant and wide-spread as in the earlier epoch, and their repertoire as varied. Along with the themes and subjects, already known, new ethnic types are introduced in the terracotta art of this period, a clear reflection, no doubt, of the racial influx that was charac-

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teristic of this phase of Indian history. Moreover, we find also representations of a number of homely scenes and popular stories. The active centres of terracotta art of this period were also those that we have already referred to in connection with this art of the earlier epoch. Mathurā and Taxila represent the two most important centres, while Ahichchhatrā, Kauśāmbī, Bhita, Rajghat, Vaiśālī, Bangarh, etc. have each supplied conspicuous objects. The plastic diction of the earlier trend seems to be continued and developed resulting in a physical form, slender and refined, and with rounded features, melting planes and flowing contours. In this phase also the female figures predominate and in their general bearing and stances, in the treatment of the dresses and ornaments and in the fullness of their features, soft and rounded to a point of sensuous grace, they clearly betoken distinct affiliation with the Kushāṇa idiom in its human and worldly concept. The drapery is entirely diaphanous and the features shine forth luminously under the garment which is usually indicated at the lower end by a ring-like circle around the legs just above the ankles. These figgurines usually stand in extremely flexible attitudes, attitudes which were rather unknown in the earlier Śuṅga-Kāṇva epoch. It is only in the later phases of Kushāna art that such elasticity and pliability have been gradually achieved. The freely flowing contours and melting planes supply a rhythm in the multiplicity of bends the parallel of which can only be recognised in the *yakshiṇī* figures on the Bhutesar pillars at Mathurā. In terracotta, however, the lush sensuality of Mathurā is found to be much subdued and refined in the slender body types. They illustrate poses of elegant ease, graceful relaxation and care-free langour, indicative of a life, to a certain extent, aristocratic and sophisticated.

In the Kushāṇa phase terracotta figurines in the round also appear to have come into use. Such figurines seem to have been produced from moulds, each in two pieces representing the front and the back, and then joined together. In this respect such terracotta figurines indicate an advance in the technique of terracotta art. Freed from the limitations of relief technique, the figurines gain in volume and depth and there may be recognised the same effect of warm and sensuous beauty that was distinctive of Kushāṇa art of Mathurā. There had been significant productions, in relief as well as in the round, in terracotta during the Kushāṇa phase and it is not possible to discuss

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even the most important ones individually.

The terracotta art of the Śaka-Kushāṇa phase seems to represent a movement, parallel to the contemporary plastic art in stone, and bears the stamp and impress of the latter. It is, likewise, as worldly and physically minded. With well-modulated forms and smooth and sensuous contours, the animated and lively terracotta figurines of this period supply an interesting picture of the varied secular life, rich in social content and significance.

NOTES

[1] Stella Kramrisch, Indian Terracottas *(Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. VII, 1939, p. 105*)*.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[4] Indian potters of the present day still make clay images in this process. The body is modelled by the hand, the ornaments are impressed from separate moulds and then applied, and the head, again pressed from a mould, is then affixed to the shoulders by means of a tenon. They have moulds of varying sizes according to the proportions of the images.

[5] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, pl. 6.

[6] A. K. Coomaraswamy, Archaic Indian Terracottas *(IPEK.*, 1928, p. 68*)*.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[8] *ASR.*, 1917-18, pt. I, p. 27, pl. XVI; also A. K. Coomaraswamy, Archaic Indian Terracottas *(IPEK.*, 1928, fig. 51*)*.

[9] *ASR.*, 1926-27, pl. XXXI, k.

[10] A. K. Coomaraswamy, Archaic Indian Terracottas *(IPEK.*, 1928, fig. 14*)*.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 6, fig. 26.

[12] K. P. Jayaswal, Terracottas dug out at Patna *(JISOA.*, Vol. III, 1935, p. 126, pl. XXXII, fig. 1*)*.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 126, pl. XXXII, figs. 2 and 3.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 126, pl. XXX, figs. 1 and 4.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 126, pl. XXXI.

[16] Stella Kramrisch, Indian Terracottas *(JISOA*, Vol. VII, 1939, p. 107*)*.

[17] A. Banerji Sastri, Remains of a pre-historic civilisation in the Gangetic Valley *(Journal of the Bombay Historical Society*, Vol. III, 1930, pp. 187-91 & pls.*)*.

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[18] S. K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture*, 1st ed., 1957, figs. 74 and 75.

[19] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, pl. 7; also S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., 1962, fig. 37.

[20] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 205.

[21] S. K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture*, 1st ed., fig. 82.

[22] The terracotta plaque was recovered from a mound at Tamluk, along with several copper cast coins, as a result of the erosion of the river Rupnarayan which cut away a part of this ancient seaport city. It was exhibited in a monthly meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, now the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, in the year 1888 and was apparently presented to the Society, along with the few copper cast coins discovered on the same occasion and under similar circumstances. An illustration of the figure was published in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1888, pp. 113-14, pl. III. The remarkable plaque was, however, eventually lost and remained forgotten until Professor E. H. Johnston published the notice of a terracotta figurine, now in the Indian Institute, Oxford, in the *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology for the year 1937* (Kern Institute, Leiden), Vol. XII, p. 16, pl. V, and later on communicated a detailed article on it in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, Vol. X, 1942, pp. 94-102, pl. IX. A comparison of the illustration of the plaque, published in the Journal, with that in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for the year 1888, cited above, leaves no doubt that the terracotta figurine, now in the Indian Institute, Oxford, is the same that was discovered at Tamluk and exhibited in the monthly meeting of the Asiatic Society in March, 1888. In size, in general likeness of the figure in each illustration in respect of its bearing, ornaments, apparel, coiffure treatment, etc., in the peculiar arched mark on the forehead and in the marks of the breaks in the plaque, the figures in the two illustrations are exactly identical, and the identity of the original of the two illustrations can no longer be questioned. The present writer discussed these points in a monthly meeting of the Asiatic Society in December, 1949 (*Year Book of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1949, pp. 174-75). He also wrote to the Indian Institute, Oxford, specifying the aforesaid points of identity, and requested them to communicate their views after a comparison of the original with the illustration published in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1888*. The Curator of the Institute wrote back in reply that he had no doubt about the identity of the terracotta piece, now in possession of the Institute, with the one from Tamluk exhibited at the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1888. He further added that he could find no reference, in their records, to the time or mode of its acquisition by the Institute; but he thought it likely that it was acquired by the Institute shortly after 1888, when late Professor Monier Williams was actively engaged in collecting materials for the Museum from various parts of India. Professor Johnston and following him, other scholars have assumed that the plaque had probably come from Kauśāmbī which was an important source of early Indian terracottas. It is now definitely known to have originally belonged to Bengal, and all scholars agree that it represents one of the most valuable records of Indian terracotta art.

[23] E. H. Johnston, A Terracotta Figure at Oxford (*JISOA*., Vol. X, 1942,

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pp. 94-102, pl. IX),

[24] Along the back the hair appears to hang down in a heavy mass reaching almost to the level of the knees. Though clearly visible in the lower part of the background, it seems to have escaped the notice of Professor Johnston who probably mistook the mass of hair for the fluttering scarves. The fluttering ends of the scarves are clear and cannot possibly be confused with the heavy mass of hair.

[25] S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., p. 101, fig. 39.

[26] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 16; also Archaic Indian Terracottas *(IPEK.*, 1928, p. 71, fig. 25*)*.

[27] *ASR.*, 1922-23, pl. X, b.

[28] S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., p. 103.

[29] V. A. Smith, *Jaina Stupa and other Antiquities of Mathura*, pl. XVIII.

[30] S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., p. 102.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 103; *ASR.*, 1928-29, p. 96, pl. XLII, b.

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6

GUPTA SCULPTURE: HEIGHT OF THE CLASSICAL TREND

In the first quarter of the fourth century AD the Guptas established themselves in Magadha, and with Magadha as the base of their operations the successive rulers of the dynasty extended their imperial hegemony over the greater portion of Northern India. One of the Gupta emperors, Samudragupta, uprooted the various rulers of Āryāvarta and conducted victorious expeditions south of the Vindhyas. The states on the eastern and western frontiers of the extensive domain under the imperial administration hastened to gain favour of the emperor by agreeing to pay taxes and obey his commands. Far afield the foreign rulers on the north-western fringes of the subcontinent and also Simhala and people of other islands are again said to have entered into friendly alliance with him. All these are recorded in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta. His son, Chandragupta II Vikramāditya, defeated the Śaka satraps of Western India and extended the boundaries of the empire as far as Saurāshṭra. The accounts of the inscriptions, even if shorn of eulogistic elements introduced by court poets, leave little doubt that the Guptas in the height of their power enjoyed, more or less, a paramount position in the whole of India. About the middle of the fifth century AD there appeared a new foreign menace, the terrible Hūṇas. Though their advance was at first checked by the valour of Skandagupta, the empire of the Guptas declined as much by the avalanche of foreign inroads, as by inherent internal separatism and consequent disintegration. In the first half of the seventh century AD Harshavardhana of the Pushyabhūti family raised up another imperial fabric in Northern India with Kānyakubja (Kanauj, also known as Mahodaya in early times) as the centre. This

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empire, however, proved to be short-lived and separatism asserted again leading to the emergence of a strong regional consciousness, political as well as cultural. With this conscious regionalism begins the mediaeval age in Indian history.

The rise of the Gupta dynasty as an imperial power in Northern India marked the close of a period in which the political interest was dominated by the various foreign peoples, the Yavanas, the Śakas, the Pahlavas and the Kushāṇas. This alien factor disturbed, for a time no doubt, the course of Indian history, particularly in the north-west. But these foreign peoples actually settled in India and very soon ceased to be reckoned as outsiders. They adopted Indian religions as well as Indian ways of life, and were ultimately absorbed, beyond recognition, into the complex structure of Indian population. It was a grand synthesis that spoke eloquently for the strength and vitality of Indian culture and the elasticity and adaptability of the Indian social structure. The rise of the Guptas to the paramount position in India signified not only the reappearance of a united rule over vast territories, but also led to the resurgence of a conscious national ideal, over the alien, and this ideal spread throughout the whole country. It is not surprising, hence, that the period saw the efflorescence of Indian genius in all its aspects. The previous epoch, in spite of the political events being dominated by the foreigners, had been a period of consistent artistic activity, in the north as well as in the south. The indigenous tradition in plastic arts continued its course undisturbed and recorded significant achievements. The Gupta period witnessed a heightening of the aesthetic consciousness leading to the fulfilment and culmination of the earlier trends and tendencies. The classical concept in Indian sculpture reaches its supreme expression in what is described as the golden age of the Guptas.

(i) New Aesthetic Ideal

As a culture epoch the period of the Guptas may be said to have extended from the fourth to the close of the sixth century AD. This has been an age of great artistic activity that was inspired by an intellectual consciousness hardly paralleled in any other phase of Indian history. A long and consistent course of evolution through the preceding centuries prepared the way for a complete florescence of the artistic genius of the people. In the Gupta period all the various trends and

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tendencies of the artistic pursuits of the preceding phases reach their culmination in a unified plastic tradition of supreme import in Indian history and culture. The outstanding achievements of Gupta sculpture are to be studied and understood, hence, in terms of its heritage. Gupta sculpture is the logical outcome of the classical sculpture of Mathurā and Amarāvatī (Chapter IV). Its plasticity is derived from that of Mathurā, its elegance from that of Amarāvatī. Yet, a Gupta sculpture seems to belong to a sphere that is entirely different. A refinement and definition of form and a greater delicacy of contour are inherent, no doubt, in the consistent and logical evolution of the classical idiom, and these the Gupta plastic style achieves in a perfectly normal manner. What separates the Gupta sculpture from that of the previous phase is in the atmosphere that it breathes.

The classical art of the previous epoch was passionately addicted to this mundane world and it is the physical existence, in the literal sense of the term, that attracted the attention and engrossed the vision of the artists. The lush sensuality of Mathurā and the careless abandon of Amarāvatī undergo a distinct transformation in the hands of the Gupta artists who seem to have been working for a higher ideal. A new outlook appears to have emerged to inspire the artists to rise above this mundane world – the world of senses—and bring their productions within the confines of reason and intellect. The period of the Guptas ushers in a heightened intellectual consciousness which permeates all forms of activity. Literature, sciences, arts, etc., all feel the impulse of this heightened intellectual ferment. A new orientation in the attitude towards art is noticed in the attempt to establish a close harmony between art and thought, between the outer form and the inner spirit. This leads to new aesthetic aspirations which transcend the world of senses and try to record higher experiences and deeper realisations. Art now becomes the conscious vehicle of the intellectual and spiritual conceptions of the people.

Since the early phase of classical sculpture the human form has gained much in importance. At Bharhut and Sanchi (Chapter III) the human figure appears in the composition as a part of nature, and being accommodated within the unending curves of vegetation gradually acquires a contour that aims at a suggestion of the ceaseless flow and rhythm of the creeper. In the early centuries of the Christian era, at Mathurā and Amarāvatī (Chapter IV), the worldly attitude which

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prevailed lends a greater importance to the human figure. It has now an exclusive existence, apart from and independent of the world of vegetation. In the composition it is the human figure that now becomes the focus of attraction, and all other forms are subordinated to it, being used mainly to give it relief and emphasise its importance. The idea of the divine image, conceived in terms of the human form, elevates it, theoretically at least, to supra-human level and adds to its possibilities in this direction. In the Gupta period, with the complete realisation of these possibilities, the visible image becomes the vehicle of the invisible divine concept and Indian plastic art reaches its destined spiritual goal.

With the growing importance of the human figure nature recedes into the background, but in so doing it leaves behind its unending and undulating rhythm in the human form. In the eternally flowing movement of the rambling creeper one may recognise the ceaseless flow of life in this world. The movement now passes on to the human figure, clinging to and permeating the form "now completely moulded according to this unending rhythm", as Kramrisch[1] admirably puts it. The principle which formerly resided in the flowing vegetal design is now transferred to the human form which, hence, becomes the conscious vehicle of the inner movement of life. The endlessly flowing device of the creeper conveyed the suggestion of a movement extending beyond the limits of the composition. But when transferred to the human figure this movement is strictly confined within the limits of the form, though "dynamically active" therein. The frenzied and tumultuous worldly existence in art of the previous epoch is brought under discipline, mental as well as physical, in which all worldliness has vanished. A concentrated inner energy endows the figure with vitality. A subtle mental experience, arising out of the conquest of the mind over the body, illumines the entire figure with a calm spiritual expression, best conveyed not only by the disciplined body, but also by every lineament of the face. The eyes with drooping eye-lids betoken an inner vision arising out of a meditative absorption in *yoga*. As the vehicle of the flow of life and of complete spiritual experience, the human frame of the divine image rises above the level of mere physical existence and the image reaches its true spiritual import.

The human figure, termed as the image, is, hence, the pivot of Gupta sculpture, and this, as the conscious medium of the divine con-

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cept, experiences certain distinct transformations in respect of modelling. The strong physical and naturalistic rendering, characteristic of the previous epoch, is now subdued and gives place to a rarified and idealised modelling of the human form. A new canon of beauty is evolved leading to the emergence of a new aesthetic ideal. This ideal is based upon an explicit understanding of the human body in its inherent softness and pliability. The preference for a youthful form has already been recognised in the previous phase. Since the urge of life-movement is the most vital in youth, it is always the youthful form that the artist selects for representation. The aesthetic and ritualistic canons, systematised in a later age, echo this predilection for the youthful form in no uncertain terms. A study of the canonical prescriptions governing the representation of the divine beings would testify that with very few exceptions the gods and goddesses are enjoined to be shown as perpetually young. The gliding sensitiveness of the soft and pliant body with its smooth and shining texture facilitates free and easy movement, and though seemingly at rest, the figure appears to be infused with an energy that proceeds from within. This is true not only of the images of the divine beings, Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina, but also of ordinary men and women. It is the sensitiveness of the plastic surface that the artist seeks to emphasise, and for this all superfluities, such as elaborate draperies, jewelleries, etc. that tend to conceal the body, are reduced to the minimum. The wet or transparent drapery becomes the fashion in this age.

Even if nature is practically eliminated from the composition during this period, it is interesting to notice that the volumes and curves found in nature supply the norms for the representation of the various parts of the human body to be co-ordinated in a form that is at once naturalistic and aesthetically ideal. The flower, the leaf or the trunk of a tree, a bird or an animal constitutes the criteria on the similitudes of which the various parts of the body are enjoined to be rendered. According to Indian view of art a superior uniformity and grace of form may be recognised in the animal and vegetable worlds than among the human beings. The *Śukranītisāra*[2] expresses this attitude in a significant statement, "Perchance one (man) in a million has perfect form, perfect beauty." It is, hence, certain delicately conceived similes from the world of nature that supplies the artists with the proper criteria for the representation of the ideal form. A few such conventional

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similes may not be out of place here by way of illustration.[3]

The face is to have the smooth and ovoid shape of an egg, the forehead that of a bow and the eye-brows are to follow either the line of a delicate *nim* (margosia) leaf or that of a bow. The eyes are to resemble a *wag*tail *(khañjana)*, a deer's, a *śapharī* fish, a lotus or a lotus petal, accordiug to mood. Eyes express a variety of emotions and a proper suggestion of the different moods requires different norms. The eyes of women are particularly restless and the Indian aesthetic canon has a number of similes to express the different emotions and temperaments. The *khañjana* is a small bird with a dancing gait and its playful gaiety characterises beautifully the darting glance of a woman. The deer is a simple and innocent animal and the tender and innocent look of a woman is appropriately compared to that of a deer. The small *śapharī* fish *(puntius sophore)* is, by nature, restless and seems to be an apposite simile for the quick and restless glance of a pretty damsel. The lotus bud eyes convey a suggestion of serene peacefulness, while the lotus petal eyes with their drooping eye-lids that of a calm and contemplative mood. The nose is to resemble a sesame flower *(tilaphula)*, usual in the representations of goddesses and women, or the beak of a parrot *(śukanāsā)*, seen in the case of gods and men. The red and luscious *bimba* fruit forms an appropriate simile for the soft and moist lips in their fulness (cf. *pakkabimbādharoshṭhī* of Kālidāsa). The neck is compared to a conchshell *(kambugrīva)*, the three spiral turns at the top supplying the similitude for the folds. The torso is broad in the upper section and attenuated in the lower, the latter in case of gods and men being compared to the waist of a lion *(siṁhakaṭi)*; and in case of goddesses and women to the middle of a kettle drum *(ḍamaru-madhya)*. The shoulders are to have the form of an elephant's head *(gaja-tuṇḍa)*, while the arms are to resemble the trunk of a young plantain tree, firm, smooth as well as resilient. The long and sensitive fingers are to have the fulness of a beanpod. The firm and resilient trunk of a plantain tree is an apt simile for the things, which have sometimes been compared also to the trunk of a young elephant *(karabha)*. The calf of the leg is to have the shape of the swelling abdomen of a spawning fish, while the hands and the feet are compared to lotus flowers or young leaves of plants.

The human body is thus found to be composed of parts rendered in terms of similitudes drawn from the various elements of nature,

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and the result is an idealised form illumined by a supreme sense of organic and rhythmic beauty. One part naturally melts into the other, and in the rendering of the body there is nothing abrupt that might hinder or interfere with the fluid and suave contours. It is in the Gupta period that one may recognise a conscious preference for these ideal norms and the writings of Kālidāsa, the greatest of our classical poets, are replete with illustrations of such similitudes in the description of the beauty of the human body. The following verse in his *Kumārasambhava* (I. 49) describing Pārvatī's perfect beauty epitomises admirably the entire Indian attitude in this respect:

sarvopamādravyasamuchchayena yathāpradeśaṁ viniveśitena/
sā nirmitā viśvasṛijā prayatnād-ekasthasaundaryadidṛikshayeva//

In this context one is also reminded of the Purāṇic legend of Tilottamā of rare beauty and charm being created in terms of similitudes drawn from nature point by point.

These norms were gradually systematised in the form of a definite aesthetic canon that was to constitute the standard for all future artists. By following these norms the artist is properly trained and disciplined for the representation of ideal beauty.

The intellectual discipline lies further at the root of the evolution of the various attitudes *(āsanas)* and gestures *(mudrās)* for the proper rendering of the different actions and moods to be attributed to the figures. A general classification in respect of attitudes is that of standing *(sthānaka)*, seated *(āsana)* and reclining *(śayana)* positions. With regard to the standing posture subsidiary poses, measured in terms of *bhaṅgas* or flexions of the body, may be recognised. *Sama-bhaṅga* is the straight and erect pose, a pose of equipoise, in which the two vertical halves of the body are symmetrically disposed and the *sūtra* or the plumb line, passing exactly along the middle of the body, corresponds to its vertical axis. In standing *(sthānaka)* attitude it is also known as *samapada-sthānaka*. The pose is resorted to in order to show the divine being in his irrefutable calmness and immutability. There are poses, again, in which the plumb line, instead of corresponding to the axis, is disturbed in a greater or lesser degree according to the flexion or flexions imparted to the body. *Ābhaṅga* represents the pose of a slight flexion with the contours subtle and delicate in their suavity, while *dvi-bhaṅga* is the pose of two bends in the body. In *tri-bhaṅga* or the

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pose of triple flexion the curves themselves are full of elasticity and pliability, such a pose being calculated to endow the body with the utmost plastic effect of which it is capable. An emphasised form of *tri-bhaṅga* with the triple flexion considerably exaggerated is *ati-bhaṅga*, characteristic of the rendering of nervous moods and dynamic emotions and actions. In course of time there appear further elaborations of the standing attitude, for instance, *ālīḍha* and *pratyālīḍha*, intended to illustrate the attitudes of fight.

With regard to the seated posture *sama-bhaṅga* is identical with what is known as *vajra-paryaṅka* or adamantine pose in case of the Buddhist sculptures, especially those of the Buddha. The pose is particularly associated with the scene of his enlightenment at Bodhgaya and is symbolic of his steadfast resolve when he took his seat on the *Bodhimaṇḍa* under the *pipal* tree as beautifully expressed in the following verse:

ihāsane śushyatu me śarīraṁ tvag-asthi-māṁsaṁ vilayañcha yātu/
aprāpya bodhiṁ bahukalpa-durlabhāṁ naivāsanāt kāyamataśchalishyate//

A rigid pose with the legs crossed and soles upturned and with the upper part of the body upright and immovable characterises the *vajra-paryaṅka* and expresses austere and contemplative concentration, further enhanced by the downward glance of the eyes with drooping eye-lids. Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava* (III. 45-48) describes the ascetic Śiva in similar terms, the pose being referred to as *paryaṅka-bandha* with the erect and immovable body resembling a flicker-less lamp *(nivātanishkampam-ivapradīpam)*. A slightly relaxed pose is what is known as *padma-paryaṅka* or *padmāsana* in which the legs are simply gathered up on the lotus seat, but the soles are not required to be upturned. A much more relaxed pose is recognised in *ardha-paryaṅka* or *lalitāsana* in which one of the legs gracefully hangs down, or in what is known as *mahārājalīlā*, *i.e.* kingly pose, in which one of the legs, playfully as it were, is raised upon the seat. In either case, the body, instead of being upright and rigid, is characterised by easy and expressive flexion or flexions with suave contours. Such poses are classed under the general designation of *sukhāsana*, signifying an attitude of comfort. Reclining positions are seldom met with. The two most well known motifs of this position are seen in the episodes of the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha and of Vishṇu in Śesha-śayana.

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Indian aesthetic canon has evolved, again, a clearly formulated language of gestures. These gestures, *mudrās* as they are known in canonical and dramaturgical literature, consists of certain definite conventions in finger plays and hand poses, each of which has a significant and distinctive meaning. The commonest of such gestures and, perhaps, the earliest to be represented in art, is what is known as *abhaya-mudrā*, signifying the boon of fearlessness associated, so far as Buddhist iconography is concerned, with the incident of the taming of the mad elephant, Nālagiri, by the Buddha at Rājagṛiha. In this *mudrā* the hand is required to be shown on a level with the shoulder with the palm turned frontwards and the fingers raised (cf. figs. 33 and 35). A *pañcha-mukha* Śivaliṅga from Bhita (Uttar Pradesh) of about the first century BC shows, perhaps, the earliest rendering of this gesture in art. The *dhyāna mudrā* (also known as *samādhi-mudrā* and associated with figures of the Buddha) is the gesture of deep absorption in meditation. It occurs in association with the attitude of *vajra-paryaṅka* and requires the hands to be placed on the upturned soles of the crossed feet, one upon the other, with the palms upwards and the fingers stretched. These two *mudrās* are frequently met with in early images of the pre-Gupta age, but simply as mere inert symbols. Gupta art, with a heightened intellectual consciousness, not only makes a greater use of the symbolic gestures, already known, but further endows them with significantly artistic forms. It also introduces others, equally potent and vibrant in their aesthetic and spiritual imports. With the figures of the Buddha are associated two other conventional gestures, *bhūsparśa-mudrā (bhūmisparśamudrā)* and *dharmachakrapravartana-mudrā*. The first is associated with the scene of the enlightenment at Bodhgaya *(sambodhi)* in which the Master, when assailed by Māra, called on Mother Earth as witness, an action that is signified by the Buddha, while seated in *vajra-paryaṅka*, touching the ground with the fingers of his right hand that hangs down over his right knee, palm inwards. The second signifies the great event of the turning of the Wheel of Law by the Buddha, that is, his preaching of the first sermon in the deer park (Mṛigadāva) at Ṛishipattana (Isipatana—Sarnath). This *mudrā* is represented by the two hands held near the breast, the right, turned outward, with the thumb and the forefinger joined and the remaining fingers touching those of the other hand which is held similarly, but with the palm inward. This *mudrā* seems to be a combination of

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jñāna (signifying the attainment of wisdom) and *vyākhyāna* (signifying exposition), the former symbolised by the left hand and the latter by the right. Another gesture, frequently met with, is the *varada-mudrā*, signifying the granting of a boon, which is rendered by the hand, usually right, hanging down with the palm outward and the fingers stretched. In Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhist iconography these five *mudrās (abhaya, dhyāna, bhūsparśa, dharmachakrapravartana* and *varada)* came to be considered as the characteristic cognisances of the five Dhyānī Buddhas.

Mention may also be made of a few other *mudrās* in this context. *Vitarka-mudrā* or the gesture of discussion is signified by the hand shown on a level with the shoulder with the palm turned outward with the middle or index finger touching the tip of the thumb. *Añjali-mudrā*, the gesture of devotion, is represented by the two hands joined palm to palm near the breast. This is to be differentiated from *namaskāra-mudrā* (*Tathāgatavandana-mudrā* in Buddhist context) or the gesture of obeisance which is indicated by a hand held up near the head with the palm outward and fingers stretched. Besides, there are many hand poses, such as *kaṭaka-hasta, lola-hasta* (*lamba-hasta* or *gaja-hasta*), *patāka-hasta,* etc. described in Indian texts on aesthetics and dramaturgy. Innumerable are the gestures and poses defined in the Indian canonical texts, and each of them signifies one or other aspect of a divinity, a symbol, so to say, for a certain action or mood. Religious symbolism apart, Gupta art transforms each *mudrā* into an elegant artistic motif, potent and vibrant with an inner consciousness of its real spiritual function. Rene Grousset,[4] the noted French critic, beautifully expresses the spiritual and aesthetic quality of the Indian *mudrās* in his following observations: "Never, indeed, has the spiritual value of the hands—those flowers of the flesh, which hold in their chalice the whole of human tenderness and thought—been comprehended with such mystical insight. The whole of the great peace of Buddhism is contained in the gesture known as *dhyānamudrā*. The whole of the Blessed One's 'power of gentleness' is revealed in the *abhayamudrā*. . . . On the other hand, what calm assurance in the gesture by which he takes the earth to witness; what supreme elegance—the finished grace of reason in the perfect sage—in the gestures of discussion and of the *dharmachakra!* . . . . When the Buddhist *mudrās* find interpreters worthy of them, they are, if we may

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be allowed to borrow the language of Ruskin, 'gestures of the soul', transposing pure moral beauty into its direct aesthetic equivalent."

It should be observed, however, that the new aesthetic canon, outlined above, the canon of attitudes, hand poses and gestures, does not come into being suddenly, but is the result of an intellectual process which takes a clear and explicit direction in the Gupta classical phase. A few centuries elapse before the canon reaches a definite and systematised shape. This is true also with regard to the canon of proportions *(tāla-māna)* and iconographic norms *(pratimā-lakshaṇa)*. In each of these it is the Gupta classical sculpture that sets the standard for the succeeding art movements to follow. The intellectualism that distinguished the Gupta classical movement declines, however, in the subsequent phases, and a mechanical systematisation leads to an unavoidable stylisation that ushers in the mediaeval phase in Indian art history. All aspects considered, Gupta sculpture represents the highest expression of Indian artistic genius, an expression in which one may discern a complete harmony between art and thought, between the form and the ideology that it stands for.

(ii) Mathurā and Sarnath

Plastically Gupta sculpture is the logical outcome of the Kushāṇa art of Mathurā, and it is interesting to observe that the Gupta plastic conception, in the sense that we have defined above, has possibly its beginnings in the Mathurā ateliers. Among the sculptures, betokening what we have described as the Gupta classical ideal, the earliest, at least so far as extant remains go, is an image of Bodhisattva (so styled in the votive inscription on the pedestal) from Bodhgaya (fig. 58). The image is said to have been consecrated in year 64 of one *Mahārāja* Trikamala of uncertain identity. The problem is whether the date is to be referred to the regnal year of this ruler, or to an era[5] which is not specified. The palaeography of the inscription may ascribe it to the fourth century AD, a date which seems to be supported also by the style of the sculpture. The image, no doubt, comes from Bodhgaya; but its Mathurā origin is apparent, not only on account of the buff-coloured sandstone in which it is carved, but also because of its style which clearly illustrates the plastic tradition of Mathurā. The physical form with its massiveness and heavy stolidity is explicitly a statement of the Mathurā conception of images. The folds of the garment on the

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left shoulder and arm, though thinned down, are reminiscent, again, of the Mathurā type of drapery. But these represent conventions that are concerned merely with the outward appearance of an image. These apart, a miraculous transformation seems to have taken place in respect of the artistic character of the image. The rigid geometrical composition introduces an austere discipline which seems to restrain all earthly bearings of the monumentalised body and to endow it with a concentrated energy that has its root in the within. Similarly, the eyes with the drooping eye-lids and glance directed to the tip of the nose appear to be looking inward, signifying the mind absorbed in deep meditation and concentration. With this clarity of form, disciplined and at the same time intellectual, and concentrated indrawn expression, the image attains its true spiritual import and level. "The Bodhisattva image from Bodhgaya", Kramrisch[6] correctly says, "is the first image in India which by its form signifies what its name implies." The movement for imparting a spiritualised character to the image may, possibly, be recognised even in the earlier phase in a gradual attempt to subject the body to some kind of restraint and discipline, and a few images from Mathurā (fig. 56)[7] and Gandhāra,[8] probably beolnging to the late Kushāṇa idioms, nearly reach the level, plastically at least, because of the smooth and refined contours of their heavy and stolidly built forms. The spiritual significance, however, is yet to be attained, and it was left to Mathurā, one of the most important centres of early classical plastic tradition, to complete the process by supplying an expression of inner spiritual experience rendered explicitly in the entire physiognomy of the body as well as of the face, as we have in the Bodhgaya Bodhisattva referred to above. Indeed, the principal theme of the plastic art of this period is concerned chiefly with the representation of a disciplined body and conquered mind, and this is true not only of the images of Bodhisattva or the Buddha, but of those of the divinities of other faiths as well. In no moment of Indian art history can any distinction in style be made among works of art produced for the various religions. The Śivaite head from Mathurā,[9] now in the Calmann Galleries (London), or the image of Vishṇu in his Vaikuṇṭha aspect[10] from the same site reveals the same style and tradition and signifies the same spirit of calm and concentrated inner absorption. The images of Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras from Mathurā[11] belonging to this period, despite their hieratic stiffness

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leading to a lack of warmth, reflect also an identical idea of discipline in body and facial physiognomy. All are inspired by the same ideal, although there might be a certain difference in the emphasis of that ideal. It is however in the images of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas that one may recognise the supreme expressions of the ideal itself. The ideal did not remain confined to India but travelled further. The splendid image of the Buddha, seated in *dhyāna-mudrā*,[12] at Anurādhapura (Sri Lanka) is one of the most felicitous productions of the new aesthetic idiom. Indian in plasticity as well as in the spirit that it breathes, it has rightly been admitted to be one of the great masterpieces of Indian art. The Buddha images of Borobudur[13] (Java), although belonging to a period several centuries later, are seen to be vibrant with the same idea and spirit of Gupta classicism.

The Bodhgaya image of Bodhisattva (fig. 58), described above, represents a happy and successful combination of the stolid dignity of the Kushāṇa idiom with the restrained grace and inner spiritualism of the Gupta. The heavy stolidity of the fourth century gradually sheds off its massiveness and toughness in the fifth when the new idiom reaches its apogee. The image now acquires an easy and reposeful attitude born, no doubt, of an inner peace resulting from the conquest of the mind, already achieved and naturally taken for granted. Plastically, a soft and delicate modelling with easy and flowing contours and melting planes leads to a beauty of definition, as well as to a spirit of calm and peaceful contemplation. With a smooth and luminous body, seemingly weightless in existence, the image appears to breathe the enjoyment of supreme bliss arising out of an inner serenity of the mind. Sarnath, where the Master preached his first sermon (literally turned the Wheel of Law), was one of the most active centres of this new idiom, and remarkable specimens of sculpture from this hallowed site supply a noble and authentic commentary on the gradual advance of the new aesthetic ideal. Such image as the Bodhgaya Bodhisattva, evidently of Mathurā origin, furnished the arche-type to the artists of Sarnath, as certain works of early date clearly[14] demonstrate. Yet, as Kramrisch[15] says, "the Sarnath version of the Mathurā prototype is subtler than the original." Scholars are agreed that in the Sarnath images of the fifth century, in spite of their derivation from the Mathurā idiom, a greater delicacy of execution, along with a sensitive treatment of the seemingly weight-

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less body and an intensity of expression signifying a spirit of calm and reposeful peace, must be regarded as an independent contribution.

The Sarnath idiom becomes acknowledged even beyond the confines of that school, and its influence is clear and explicit in other centres of artistic pursuits as well, though not in as intensified an expression as at Sarnath. Mathurā, despite the fact that it could not shake off the heaviness and volume characteristic of its earlier works, feels also the elegant impulse of the refined Sarnath trend. There is no longer any trace of mask-like coldness that pervaded the earlier images. The entire physiognomy, in spite of a certain massiveness and ponderosity, seems to accept the delicate touch of the Sarnath idiom in the organic and rhythmic relation of the volumes and planes and the harmoniously integrated contours, and is, at the same time illumined by a deeper sense of spiritual introspection. In case of the standing figure (fig. 59) the stiff and erect *samapada-sthānaka* attitude is rigidly maintained. In the figure of the Master the drapery is made to cover both the shoulders as has been recognised in a few Mathurā images of the earlier epoch bearing apparently the impact of the Gandhāra tradition. The volume of the drapery, however, thins down almost to nothingness, but the folds, again a traditional Mathurā motif, still persist, though simply as a series of thin and parallel curved ridges that closely adhere to the body which is visible, and that luminously, underneath the 'ribbed' robe in the disciplined majesty of its modelling. The treatment of the head is likewise transformed. The swelling roundness of the interlocking planes almost in a geometric fashion seems to impart to the face a feeling of warmth and fullness and a spiritual value as well (fig. 57). In spite of such plastic refinement and an idea of spiritual absorption, the image at Mathurā remains statuesque in its own dignity, while that at Sarnath with its slender and more sensitive treatment of the body and the face, carried almost to a point of exaggeration, seems to soar above in the supreme enjoyment of its own blissful experience. Contrastingly, the Mathurā Buddha with its solid massiveness still conveys more the feeling of 'awesome dignity and power.'

Sarnath introduces not only a delicacy and refinement of form, but also a relaxed attitude, by breaking the body, in case of the standing figure, slightly on its own axis thus imparting to it a certain litheness and movement (fig. 60), in contrast to the columnar rigidity of

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contemporary Mathurā works. Even in the case of the seated figure, the slender physiognomy carries in itself a notion of movement, unearthly in its bearing. Again, the Sarnath artist transforms the drapery into a completely transparent sheath for the body closely following the modelling in all its nuances. The folds have been discarded altogether; an indication of the drapery survives only on the thin lines on the body suggesting the edges of the garment. The sides that fall apart are given, again, a flimsy muslin-like texture. The body in its shining plasticity constitutes the principal theme of the Sarnath artists. But this body, resolved into the 'purest plastic essence', remains aloof from all worldly stirrings and allurements. To quote Benjamin Rowland,[16] "the planes have been so simplified that the sculpture takes on an almost abstract character; it is as though, by the very perfection and unbroken smoothness of the subtly swelling convex surfaces which compose the body, the sculptor strove not only for a beautifully plastic statement of form and volume, but for an expression of the ineffable perfection of the body of the Buddha as well."

Sarnath has produced a fairly large number of sculptures which illustrates this distinctive idiom in a remarkably striking manner. Among these, the sublime image of the Master represented in the act of turning the Wheel of Law (i.e. preaching the first sermon) is admittedly one of the masterly creations of Gupta classical sculpture (fig. 61). The image is carved in Chunar sandstone, the most effective medium of the school, and has a surface texture of shining smoothness. There are traces, again, of red pigment in parts of the drapery. The great Teacher is shown seated in *vajra-paryaṅka* attitude with the hand near the breast in *dharmachakrapravartana-mudrā* (the gesture of preaching). Below, on the pedestal, is shown the Wheel, flanked on two sides by seven kneeling figures with folded hands *(añjali-mudrā)*, five of shaven-headed monks representing the first adherents to the faith, and the remaining two, possibly, the donor couple. Two mutilated figures of recumbent deer also appear on two sides of the Wheel, evidently in commemoration of the spot (Mṛiga-dāva) where this signal event took place. The Master is seated in the immutable *vajra-paryaṅka* attitude; in spite of this rigidly static pose, the entire physiognomy with its gliding planes, pure and harmonious limbs and soft and mellifluous contours is imbued with a notion of lithe movement that seems to throb within. Again, a subtle discipline permeates the entire

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figure, physically as well as mentally. This is evident as much in the smooth and rhythmic treatment of the body as in the ethereal countenance suggestive of a mind absorbed and in serene enjoyment of spiritual bliss. Equally potent and vibrant is the gesture of the hands in which the subtle play of the fingers seems to pulsate with the utterings of the Master on this memorable occasion. Here we have a rare instance in which a *mudrā* truly signifies what it implies. The metaphorical conception in the rendering of the human form, alluded to above (*ante.* pp.127-129), finds its most appropriate illustration in this superb creation of an unknown Sarnath artist. The line of the brows resembles the tensile curve of the bow; the eyes are shaped like lotus petals signifying correctly the inward look; the face has the ovoid shape of an egg; and the body combining and integrating all the features in accordance with the similitudes from nature as described in the aesthetic canon. To this rarified form the throne on which the master sits supplies a decorative background in which two leogryphs support a lintel, with *makara* head ends, which in its turn upholds a circular numbus *(prabhā)* exquisitely carved with a broad foliated ornament within beaded borders. Two figures of flying *vidyādharas* appear on the outer edges of the nimbus. Such decorative *prabhās* are seen also in other figures from Sarnath. In Mathurā also highly ornamented nimbus is characteristic of Buddha images of the period (fig. 59); the treatment, however, is slightly different. The design consists of concentric rings of floral patterns with an open-petalled lotus in the centre, the petals effectively surrounding the head of the figure.

The Sarnath preaching Buddha has been recognised to be a great masterpiece of Gupta sculpture and, indeed, of Indian art of all periods. Among the abundant productions at Sarnath few, however, reach the spiritual and aesthetic level of this superb creation. Nevertheless, in the majority of creations Sarnath maintains a heightened intellectual and aesthetic consciousness of more than ordinary interest (fig. 62). The softened plasticity and the sublime spiritual grace constitute the striking features of the Sarnath idiom and in Gupta classicism this idiom plays the most conspicuous part. A gradual emphasis on slender form and more refined contours ultimately leads to an almost weightless physiognomy that seems to have soared above all earthly moorings.

Sarnath has produced also a number of steles depicting the scenes

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from the life of the Buddha (fig. 63). The scenes represented are usually four (Nativity, Enlightenment, First Sermon and *Parinirvāṇa*) or eight (the above four principal incidents plus the four subsidiary ones: Great Miracle of Śrāvastī, Descent from the Trayastriṁśa Heaven, Taming of the mad elephant Nālagiri and Offering of honey by the monkeys). In the stela composition the scenes are divided into panels and each incident has been turned into a stereotyped iconic motif containing only the essentials necessary for identification. The naivette and spontaneity of the narrative compositions of the earlier epochs are missing in these symbolic representations. The figures of the Buddha in the panels share, more or less, the distinctive characteristics of the Sarnath idiom.

The Mathurā and Sarnath idioms signify collectively the Gupta classical tradition reverberations of which may be felt, in varying degrees, in the artistic activities throughout the subcontinent, in the north as well as in the south. The achievements of Sarnath, as exemplified by the preaching Buddha (fig. 61), registers a spiritual salvation which is but seldom attained. Renè Grousset[17] describes an image like this as representing "an art so inspired by intellectualism as to be a direct expression of soul through the purely ideal beauty of form." This achievement remains the ideal which the artists strive to reach, but hardly succeed. Nevertheless, this striving seems to link together the art movements in different centres by the same plastic and spiritual aspirations.

(iii) Madhyadeśa

With Mathurā and Sarnath as the two outstanding centres of Gupta classical art its influence spread rapidly in Madhyadeśa. It is not to be expected, however, that every production of this classical phase would reach the supreme level of artistic and spiritual experience recorded at Sarnath, or even at Mathurā. The image of Kārttikeya[18] in the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi) and the head of Śiva or Lokeśvara[19] in the Sarnath Museum, though representing eminent creations in the Sarnath idiom, are plastically heavier and spiritually on a lower plane. The colossal fragmentary sculpture of Kṛishṇa Govardhanadhārī (Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University) illustrates the Sarnath idiom in a greater intensity, not only in respect of the physiognomical treatment of the

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figure of Kṛishṇa, but also in the expression of calm, detached absorption, in spite of the Herculean feat that he is engaged in.

The reverberations of Sarnath travelled further afield. In varying degrees they touch such sculptures as the Eka-mukha Liṅga from Khoh (fig. 64), the sculptural decor of the Śiva temple at Bhumara,[20] the colossal Narasiṁha from Besnagar[21] and *Apsara* couple from Sondani,[22] both in the Gwalior Museum, the fine image of the river goddess Gaṅgā from Besnagar,[23] now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (U. S. A.). To these may be added also the big alto-relievo sculpture from Pathari,[24] of a slightly later date, and the sculptured lintel from Pawaya, both now in the Museum at Gwalior. All these sculptures from Madhya Pradesh are characterised by a relatively broad and terse modelling, possibly an inheritance from the earlier Madhyadeśa tradition at Sanchi, and, occasionally, not too facile contours. Nevertheless, the poise and balance that distinguish the Sarnath idiom are equally evident in the sculptures of this region. The Eka-mukha Liṅga from Khoh (fig. 64) nearly approximates the Sarnath ideal, plastically as well as aesthetically, in the treatment of the face. In the slimness of form the Besnagar Gaṅgā recalls the Sarnath idiom. The sculptural decor of the Bhumara temple and the sculptures on the lintel from Pawaya[25] are distinguished by smooth and sinuously carved forms with fluid and rhythmic contours integrated in a striking manner within the decorative setting. In one way or other the artistic movement in this region seems to bear the impress of the Sarnath idiom of Gupta classical trend.

The architectural pieces from Garhwa, near Allahabad (now in the Lucknow Museum), bear interesting reliefs[26] that are characterised by a plastic treatment, subtle and refined in the manner of Sarnath. Though forming group combinations, each figure has a bearing of noble detachment, born of the attitude characteristic of the age. The image of the Buddha from Mankuwar[27] (Allahabad district), heavy and stolidly built and with a shaven head, is plastically nearer to the Kushāṇa idiom of Mathurā, but the drapery is treated in the Sarnath fashion. According to the inscription on the pedestal the image was consecrated in the (Gupta) year 129 (AD 448-49). Evidently representing a survival of the older Kushāṇa idiom, this image seems to stand apart from the contemporory trend which is one of greater refinement and sublimation of the plastic content. The plastic content, it has

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already been observed, reaches an almost unearthly perfection at Sarnath in the latter half of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century AD.[28]

The all-pervading Gupta classicism appears to have made its influence felt even where other forces might be seen to have been at work. The sculptures on the Vishṇu temple at Deogarh (Jhansi district, Uttar Pradesh) of the fifth-sixth century AD are interesting in this context. The temple stands on a substantial basement, the sides of which are embellished with continuous frieze of sculptures in high relief, while the walls of the cubical cella above are provided with alto-relievo-sculptures in framed niches, one on each side of the three sides, the fourth, i.e. the front one, being occupied by the elaborately carved doorway. The continuous sculptured frieze[29] depicts the scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, an epic of great popularity at that time. It seems to belong to the older idiom of narrative reliefs with all their characteristic spontaneity and dramatic content, although these qualities, instead of representing a wild and frenzied existence, are found to be governed by a certain discipline in the manner of the age. The modelling, though broader and coarser, is nearer to the Gupta classical ideal with its metaphorical conventions in the rendering of anatomy, while to the same ideal belongs also the spirit of dignified poise and calm detachment which the figures portray. The alto-relievo sculptures on walls of the cella, plastically as well as spiritually, reflect still more the impact of the Gupta classical tradition. The Nara-Nārāyaṇa relief[30] breathes the aroma of the classicism of the Sarnath idiom, not only in the sublimity of its conception but also in its plastic treatment. The two principal figures, with their slender and elongated forms and flowing contours, rarified modelling and attitude of inner absorption, reach almost the height of spiritual experience recorded at Sarnath. The other two sculptures depict two other episodes from the mythology of Vishṇu: *Gajendra-moksha* and *Śesha-śayana* Vishṇu (fig. 65). Though permeated by the classical ideal, the forms are distinguished by broader and heavier modelling and rather hardened outlines. Plastically hence, they may be considered to be on a lower level of artistic and, perhaps, also of emotional experience. In the scene of *Gajendra-moksha* and in the frieze beneath the figure of *Śesha-śayana* Vishṇu (which is carved on a separate slab) there may be recognised a certain attempt at dramatic conception of relief composition. Vishṇu, along with his

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associates, in the latter episode seems to be in a kind of stupor, and from this some scholars are inclined to think that a kind of stupor appears to have overtaken the Gupta classical ideal. It is to be noted, however, that in a correct description of the myth represented in the sculpture Vishṇu is required to be shown in deep sleep of meditation *(yoga-nidrā)*.

During the Gupta classical phase sculptural activities in Madhyadeśa include also works in metal. Reference may be made in this connection to two groups of bronzes, one from Dhanesar Khera (Banda district, Uttar Pradesh) and the other from Phophnar in Madhya Pradesh. One[31] of the Dhanesar Khera bronzes, now in Nelson Gallery of Art (Kansas City, U. S. A.), shows the Buddha standing in slight *ābhaṅga* with the weight resting on the right leg. The drapery covering both the shoulders is an adaptation of the Gandhāra type. The physiognomical treatment, including that of the face, is however of the Gupta classical ideal, nearer to the Sarnath ideal of the fifth century. The Phophnar Buddha[32] recalls the Gupta idiom of Mathurā, but the desiccated modelling would assign it to a period not before the sixth century.

The rock-carving, it has been observed earlier, has a technique and idiom of its own. Yet, the reliefs in the Buddhist caves at Bagh share, to a certain extent, the qualities of the unified Gupta classical tradition. A few sculptures in the Brahmanical caves at Udayagiri, near Bhilsa, may also be seen to belong to this class. But the idiom, inherent in rock-carving, remains vital and conscious enough during the period. Nowhere is this fact so vividly expressed as in the monumental carving of Varāha Avatāra at Udayagiri (fig. 67). In this conception of epic grandeur Vishṇu assumes the form of a boar (*vārāhī-tanu*) and rescues the Earth goddess from the cosmic sea. The rescued goddess of slender and supple form is supported on the garland of the boar-headed god of gigantic proportions and clings to his tusk. Her feet rest on a lotus held up by the serpent king who, with folded hands, is seen adoring the divine manifestation. Firmly the god plants his left leg on the coils of the serpent and faces the figures of other gods and sages aligned in four parallel rows above the waves of the cosmic sea.

This epic carving belongs to the beginning of the fifth century AD and shares certain qualities of the Gupta classical idiom. Yet, it

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seems to stand apart. In this cosmic scene, as Karmrisch[33] recognises, "forces more vital and at the same time more ancient and deep rise into gigantic appearance." Kramrisch's estimate[34] of this remarkable conception seems to be inspired as well as illuminating and deserves to be reproduced.

"What had mattered in the Indra and specially in the Sūrya relief at Bhājā has now reached its zenith. Cosmic myths are wrested from the stone in a language of pure plastic form. Upheavals of the sun, water and earth coagulate into compositions for which there is no man-made law. Primevally organic in its animal-human appearance, Vishṇu-Varāha rises from the waters; the latter, however, are but a regularly incised pattern of parallel wavy lines, unruffled by the mythical event. The rising and penetrating of the lingering, heavy, yet commanding mass of Vishṇu betrays no effort in carrying out its mission of rescuing the earth-goddess. The body, from its elephantine legs and arms, gathers the dignity of cosmic confidence in human shoulders and boar's head.

"The convolutions of the Nāga, worshipping in the security of its swelling hood and curling out of it, make the pedestal of the rising Vishṇu, who lifts and carries with him goddess, garland and lotus stalk, all serpentine in roundness and movement. The undifferentiated state of formlessness seems just left behind. It still clings to the figure of the Varāha avatāra, and paradoxically completes the power of composition.

". . . . The Varāha relief, in its tough and slow plasticity, heaving with the very breath of creative earth, belongs to the same mentality which had been at work at Bhājā, and now marks the rock with the more differentiated impress of a later age. While currents from Sarnath, etc. touched upon the sculpture of Central India, the connectedness with the tradition of the Dekkhan matters more at this phase."

(iv) Eastern India

The influence of Sarnath made itself felt in Eastern India. The Prāchyas, or the peoples of the East, seem to have been ethnically different to a large extent from those of Madhyadeśa and to have culture strains of an essentially divergent character. Temperamentally, the Easterners are an emotional people and at Paharpur (Rajshahi district, Bangla Desh) at a later period certain sculptures and terra-

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cotta plaques are found to be imbued with a great warmth of emotion.[35] The reliefs on the pillars from Chandimau (Bihar)[36] are, likewise, distinguished by a vivacious emotion. Such sculptures possibly indicate the pre-existence, in this part of the country, of an indigenous art tradition which, while being swayed by the soft and sweet melody of the classicism of Sarnath, leaves its own impress on the contemporary art of Eastern India in an emotional appeal of a certain delicacy. Kramrisch describes this as the eastern version of the classical idiom of Sarnath. This eastern version is distinguished by an emotional feeling which even the sublimity of the Sarnath inspiration fails to suppress. There is, at the same time, a subtle change in plastic content and the figures acquire thereby a sensuous import, hardly to be expected in the spiritual and impersonal creations of Sarnath.

Several sculptures, in stone as well as in metal, from different parts of Eastern India fully illustrate this eastern trend in its emotional and sensuous bearing in a greater or lesser degree. Such sculptures are found to be distributed over a wide area, from Bihar in the west to Assam in the east, roughly the territory comprising the Prāchya or Pūrva-deśa of ancient Indian literature. Notable examples of this trend may be seen in the large-size copper image of the Buddha from Sultanganj (Bhagalpur district, Bihar; fig. 66); the stucco figures, especially that of Nāginī, round the circular brick structure at Rājagṛiha (Rajgir, Bihar), known as Maniyar Matha; the reliefs on the pillars from Chandimau (Bhagalpur district, Bihar), already mentioned; a number of Jaina metal images from Chausa (Sahabad district, Bihar); several sculptures discovered from different parts of Bengal; the carvings on the door-frame from Dah Parvatiya (Darrang district, Assam); etc. Their link with the Sarnath idiom is obvious, plastically as well as idcologically; yet, the emotionalism of the eastern trend is equally evident, sometimes in a clearly pronounced manner, at other times with a lesser emphasis. The eastern version of the Gupta classical trend endows the sublimations of Sarnath with an emotional feeling and sensuous charm which are essentially human and belong to this world. Here one may recognise a tradition, local and indigenous in inspiration which, being swayed by the Gupta classical ideal, produces an idiom, homelier and more human in character, when compared to the highly intellectual bearing of Sarnath. The Jaina metal images from Chausa, apparently the earliest in the

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series, stand apart from the other sculptures, as will be indicated later.

The Sultanganj copper Buddha (fig. 66), now in the Birmingham Art Gallery (U.K.)[37], has the tranquil suavity and luminosity of stone Buddha figures of the Sarnath classical trend. The graceful *ābhaṅga* stance with the median line slightly broken, is evidently again, a contribution of the Sarnath idiom. Parallel curving incisions on the surface of the body indicate the presence of the folds in front reminiscent, in a remote manner though, of the Mathurā type of drapery. The subtle modelling of the body shines through the transparent robe in as effective a manner as at Sarnath. The smoothly attenuated physiognomy and the ovoid face with arched eye-brows, drooping-eyelids and delicately pointed chin are akin to those of the fifth century stone images of Buddha at Sarnath. The link with the Sarnath idiom is obvious, plastically as well as ideologically; yet the emotionalism of the eastern trend is equally evident, to quote Kramrisch,[38] in "the nervy manner in which pointed finger-tips are bent slightly backwards, deeper shadows round the eyes, and the lines that are more drawn from the nostrils to the mouth." The stucco figures round the circular brick structure at Rajgir exhibit, again, a fine, but emotional and sensuous rendering of the plastic form in soft and supple roundness, as seen in the figure of a Nāginī.[39] Unfortunately, the majority of these sculptures have now disintegrated and the loss is to be regretted since they formed, perhaps, the most felicitous productions of the distinctive eastern trend.

In the reliefs on the pillars from Chandimau[40] the eastern idiom of emotional vivacity is no less in evidence. This is due, not in a little measure, to the narrative character of the reliefs. The story that the reliefs depict had also an intense emotional appeal, and this may account for a different aesthetic impulse and experience, apart from the spiritual sublimity of the classicism of Sarnath. A near parallel of such a narrative idiom may also be found at Sarnath in the carvings on a lintel illustrating the Kshāntivādin Jātaka. In the Chandimau carvings the plastic content, though belonging to the Gupta classical tradition of simplified and integrated modelling, exhibits, nevertheless, a different ideal altogether. The physiognomical type is short and stumpy, though distinguished by roundness of limbs and flowing outlines. The decorative embellishments, which are emphasised in a degree, are deep and obliquely cut, and their curly ramblings appear

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to set off the figures in equally emphatic and vivacious movements. Here we have a tradition, local and indigenous in inspiration, which, swayed by the Gupta classical ideal, produces an idiom, homelier and more human in character when compared to the highly intellectual creations of Sarnath.

The Jaina metal images from Chausa, although austere-looking in hieratic stiffness of rigidly erect poses, either seated or standing, illustrate also a conscious attempt towards the rendering of the body in accordance with the metaphorical conventions, already alluded to. The forms acquire thereby a certain rhythm within undulating contours, in spite of a degree of abstraction inherent in the conception. The features are rounded and slim and slender to a certain extent. Particularly significant in the standing figures (fig. 68) are the suave and flowing outlines from the waist to the ankles which seem to anticipate the linear content of the fifth century classical concept. The eyes, however, are broad and open and the face squarish to a certain extent. It is not unreasonable, on these considerations, to assign these sculptures to the fourth century. They appear to belong to a phase before the eastern version of the classical Sarnath idiom reaches a definitive state.

Finds of Gupta sculptures have been recorded also from different parts of Bengal. One such image (fig. 69) comes from Biharail (Rajshahi district, Bangla Desh)[41] and is now deposited in the Rajshahi Museum. It is a standing image of the Buddha, executed in Chunar sandstone exactly in the fashion of Sarnath images of the fifth century. The emotional note of the eastern version, though subdued to a certain extent, is apparent, as in the Sultanganj copper Buddha, in the deeper shadows round the eyes, the nostrils and the mouth. This eastern trait is, however, emphatically evident in two images from Sūrya, one from Kasipur (Twenty-four Perganas district, West Bengal)[42] and the other from Deora (Bogra district, Bangla Desh),[43] both possibly belonging to the sixth century. The two represent an almost identical conception carved in a kind of bluish basalt, and in stylistic and physiognomical treatment also the two are related to each other. Apart from the emotional traits in the rendering of the face in each case, the change in the medium may also indicate a new and individual direction, possibly of certain significance to future plastic activities in this area. Further, of the sixth century there is the fine gold-

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plated image of Mañjuśrī from Mahasthan (Bogra district, Bangla Desh)[44] which is a near counterpart of the contemporary Sarnath images, plastically as well as spiritually, but is, at the same time, characterised by the subdued emotionalism of the eastern trend in the rendering of the entire physiognomy, including particularly that of the face and the fingers. A soft and emotional rendering of the face characterises also the stucco head from Tejnandi (Rajshahi district, Bangla Desh),[45] now in the author's collection. This emotional idiom is known to have extended further east, as is illustrated by the carvings on the door-frame from Dah Parvatiya (Darrang district, Assam)[46] with the characteristic motifs of the river goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, at the bottom of the jambs. In their slim and attenuated forms defined by suave and flowing contours they recall the classical Sarnath tradition, though swayed by the eastern version in their emotional and sensuous content.

In resume it may be observed that the sculptural activities in Eastern India during the fifth and sixth centuries are, no doubt, indebted to the sublime classicism of Sarnath. But at the same time the plastic activities are swayed by an emotionalism in a greater or lesser degree. This eastern version of the Gupta classical trend endows the sublimations of Sarnath with an emotional feeling and sensuous charm which are essentially human and belong to this earth.

(v) Western India

The classical concept was not confined within the Gupta domains proper, but spread further in the West and in the South. In the West it is the Mathurā idiom that is generally followed. The Govardhana-dhāraṇa panel from Mandor[47] and the door panel from Nagari,[48] both in Rajasthan, continue the older tradition of narrative reliefs. The physiognomical treatment, along with poise and balance, belongs, no doubt, to the Gupta classical ideal, the sturdy and massive body-type being evidently a Mathurā contribution. A certain stiffening of plastic rendering characterises these Rajput sculptures, and might have been conditioned by ethnic reasons.

Further west, Sind has supplied several sculptures of the Gupta classical phase. Of these, the bronze figure of Brahmā from Mirpur Khas[49] (Karachi Museum, Pakistan) is one of the most well known. The figure is in the round and is remarkable in more ways than one.

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The erect stance might indicate some link with the Mathurā idiom of the Gupta classical phase. The distended abdomen that lends a flabby appearance to the body is, no doubt, conditioned by iconographic reasons. These apart, the figure may be recognised to have been greatly influenced by Sarnath classicism, plastically as well as spiritually. The soft and subtle modelling, along with the flowing contours, the transparent treatment of the drapery beneath which the luminous body shines forth and a calm and beatific expression of the face suggesting an inner absorption, all indicate a derivation from the sublime idiom of Sarnath. What is more, a sensuous and emotional feeling, not unlike that of the eastern version of the Sarnath trend, is also immanent in the rendering of the full round faces and in the treatment of the nervy slender fingers. The nearest parallel is supplied by the copper Buddha from Sultanganj (fig. 66; *ante*. p. 145) in Bihar. Gupta classical ideal extends, no doubt, over a wide stretch of territory, but the projection of the distinctive characteristics of a local version of the classical tradition, namely the eastern, to an extreme corner of Western India is highly interesting. It is more so because of the absence of any document of this local version in any of the intermediate regions. The question naturally arises whether the Brahmā figure from Mirpur Khas was produced locally or had been imported from a region lying further to the east.

Western India witnessed also important plastic practices in terracotta connected largely with Buddhist establishments like Mirpur Khas in Sind (Pakistan) and Devni Mori in Gujarat. At the latter place the activities started earlier and continued during the Gupta period. A brief discussion of terracotta art of the Gupta classical phase is reserved for a subsequent section.

(vi) Deccan

From the beginning of the classical movement in the pre-Christian epoch the Deccan had been the home of significant art movements largely connected with rock-carvings. Though not generally unrelated to the early school of Madhyadeśa, the movements in Western India and the Deccan are distinguished by a different plastic feeling and expression. The autochthonous tendencies, noticed in them, do not exhaust their possibilities entirely, and the Gupta classical ideal, when it reaches the Deccan, reacts on the contem-

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porary art of this region in a degree according to the strength or otherwise of the autochthonous trends. At times, the Gupta classicism is feebly expressed and the idiom is largely determined by the earlier autochthonous heritage. Even when the impact is stronger, it appears that there is a lack of proper understanding of the Gupta classical concept, and the result cannot be said to have been always happy. The import of Gupta classicism of the North grows thinner as it travels towards the South.

Sculptural remains of the fifth century AD are very few in the Deccan. From the sixth century there appears to have been an abundant activity and a few eminent records are worth noticing for an assessment of the trends and tendencies of contemporary Deccanese sculpture.

From Parel, near Bombay, has come an outstanding piece of sculpture which may be dated stylistically to a period not later than the sixth century AD. It is a Śivaite sculpture[50] the exact signification of which is still a matter of controversy. It is needless to enter into the divergent views in this regard. It will be profitable rather to refer to one particular view which may help us to describe the sculpture in all its essential elements. Here we have a unique conception showing the god Śiva "in his threefold presence,"[51] vertically one above the other. This central theme has been likened to a Liṅga, and from it emanate, again, multiple representations of the god, two on each side. The two lower figures of the central theme, as well as the emanations, have each two arms, while the uppermost figure is many-handed. All of them appear to be absorbed in deep meditation, although the sturdy bodies themselves are replete with a latent energy that seems to be almost elemental in bearing and to well up from within (fig. 70). The emanations bodied forth by this latent energy are dynamic in movement, but seemingly leaning to, and supported by, the central theme. The entire modelling is rarified and the strength and vitality, stored in the mighty chests, create a powerful mass rooted, so to say, in the primeval deep. A flowing outline, clearly expressed, characterises each of the figures and all seem to cohere to the central theme. The massive dynamism of the powerful bodies is, no doubt, a heritage of the earlier tradition of rock-carving in this region; but the serene attitude of concentration in *yoga* and, to a certain extent, the idealised modelling and swaying contours seem to

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be distant reverberations of the classical idiom of Sarnath.

The rock-cut reliefs in the caves at Badami,[52] may be dated about the latter half of the sixth century AD on the basis of an inscription in cave No. III which was dedicated in Śaka year 500, corresponding to AD 578. In these reliefs, again, the principal figures are distinguished by powerful bodies, often massive and monumental in proportions. The modelling, too, is full, though, to a certain extent, coarser and more generalised. The plastic content emphasises also a latent energy that seem to rise 'from deeper and more vital sources.' But whereas in the Parel sculpture or in the relief of Vishṇu on Ananta[53] in cave III at Badami (fig. 72), this energy lies latent and concentrated within the physical frame, shown as ever in tension, in the majority of the Badami reliefs it is destined to break forth in powerful and dynamic gestures. This is most forcefully expressed in the relief of Vishṇu as Trivikrama[54] in cave No. IV. A terrific movement is suggested in the outstretched arm and leg, but therein the movement does not stop. It encompasses the entire panel the limit of which is the wall itself. In other reliefs the dynamic movement may be slightly weaker,[55] but the import is practically the same. In each composition it is the principal figure that constitutes the dominant theme, and to it every other feature, be it the apparel or the accompanying figure or figures, is subordinated. What is significant, again, is that the dynamic movement suggested by the principal figure, instead of being contained within the limits of the body, extends beyond the shape and encompasses the entire composition. Everything in the composition is thus borne within an expansive dynamic content that proceeds from the principal figure. It would be wrong, however, to think that the minor figures also share in the main movement. They simply exist wrapped, as it were, by the dynamism of the dominant theme. The heavy and monumental body expressing a vital energy that extends over and encompasses the whole composition imparts to the Badami reliefs an import and significance that are hardly to be expected in the Sarnath ideal. The live rock bursts forth, so to say, under the impress of a superhuman energy and aboriginal vitality.

Such a dynamic outburst, so incompatible with the notion of Gupta classicism, as expressed at Sarnath and, to a certain extent, also at Mathurā, belongs to a tradition that is essentially autochtho-

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nous in manner as well as in character. The reliefs in the Bhaja caves of pre-christian date exemplify this tradition in a primitive state. This tradition, characteristic particularly of rock-carvings, has a long history. The Udayagiri Varāha (*ante.* pp. 142-143) and the Badami reliefs represent eminent productions of this tradition which, in the subsequent centuries, may be recognised in its supreme expressions in the reliefs of Ellora and Elephanta (Deccan) and in the open-air rock-carvings of Mahabalipuram (South India).

In striking contrast to the contribution of the dynamic autochthonous tradition, the bracket figures (fig. 71) in the Badami caves illustrate, however, more reposeful and relaxed attitudes and expressions which may echo, in a distant manner though, an awareness of the Gupta classical ideal.[56]

The very notion of the rock-cut tradition is not compatible with the ideas underlying Buddhism and images of the Buddha, the calm and compassionate teacher. In the Gupta classical phase, mainly under the patronage of the local dynasties, a number of Buddhist caves were excavated in the Deccan. These caves, in significant contrast to the earlier ones, bear innumerable figures of the Buddha, either standing or seated, in the facades,[57] in the triforiums over the aisle pillars, in the walls of the monastic caves, and so on. Even the votive chaityas in the later series of the chaitya caves bear on the front sides the images of the Master.[58] The earlier caves were also likewise embellished during this period with figure sculptures. The reliefs of the Buddhist caves of this phase at Ajanta, Karle, Aurangabad, Kanheri, etc. illustrate, as expected, a plastic content and treatment which appear to be nearer to the Sarnath ideal. At Ajanta (fig. 73) the plastic treatment is, to a certain extent, sensitive. The diaphanous rendering of the drapery with the body shining forth is, likewise, in the manner of Sarnath. But being concentrated in height, the figures seem to be of sturdier build. A quiet poise and balance also seem to distinguish such figures. In spite of the nearness, however, of the physical forms to those of Sarnath, the Ajanta figures lack the essential quality of the classical ideal of the latter. There is neither any idea of spiritual introspection, nor that of illumination. Rather, the idea conveyed by the Ajanta figures is usually one of mental stupor and drowsy exhaustion (fig. 75). There are exceptions, however, and the fine figure of Nāgarāja and his

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queen in cave XIX (fig. 74) may rank as one of the most eminent creations of the Gupta classical ideal in the Deccan. The contemporary reliefs in the caves at Karle and Aurangabad reveal, more or less, the same general character of drowsiness and exhaustion. The dance scene in Aurangabad cave IX[59] is, however, on a higher aesthetic plane on account of its plastic and rhythmic content. At Kanheri[60] the general tenor, conveyed by the majority of the cave reliefs of this phase, becomes more emphasized. The pose is further stiffened and the modelling becomes more tightened.

In summing up it may be observed that the reliefs of the Buddhist caves of the Deccan of the Gupta classical phase, though sharing the plastic content of the Sarnath Buddha figures in varying degrees, generally lack the spiritual import of the latter. As one scholar aptly says: "Compositionally detached and without any interrelatedness of inner idea or outer rhythm, the insensitive stiffness of the figures reveals that at least, so far as Buddhist art in the Deccan was concerned, the meaning and significance of the fluid and luminous thought that produced the weightless figures of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley were but little understood and experienced."[61]

Aihole was an important centre of early temple-building activity in the Deccan. In the sixth and the seventh centuries many temples were erected at this spot mainly under the patronage of the Chālukya rulers of Badami. The sculptural activity probably started at this place with heavy and spreading forms. But soon were achieved balance and poise and the reliefs are seen to be characterised by swaying outlines which impart to the figures a rhythm, almost lyrical in bearing.[62] The plastic forms are sensitive as well as refined. The preference, at least in the sixth century sculptures, is for slender and elongated shapes. In the swaying linearism of the figures, in their quiet poise and balance and in the soft and delicate plastic treatment there may be recognised, perhaps, distant reverberations of Sarnath; but the spiritual quality of the latter is hardly there. The elongated and supple forms seem, however, to be contributions of the earlier Veṅgī idiom (*ante*. pp. 83-92). In this respect the Aihole sculptures of this phase supply apparently a link between the earlier Veṅgī sculptures and the subsequent tradition of the Pallava sculptures of the Tamil land in the south.

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(vii) Post-Gupta Trends

The period of the Guptas, as a culture epoch, may be said to have extended from the fourth to the end of the sixth century AD. This period saw the full efflorescence of Indian sculptural art, the fulfilment and culmination of the earlier trends and tendencies that had been in operation for centuries. Even after the collapse of the Gupta imperial fabric, sometime about the middle of the sixth century, a greater part of Āryāvarta remained spell-bound by the heightened aesthetic qualities of the Gupta classical ideal, and the achievement, recorded during the period, were continued even during the next phase till about the middle of the eighth century AD. After the fall of the Gupta empire Harshavardhana, in the first half of the seventh century AD, reared up a certain semblance of imperial unity in Northern India. But after his death disintegration again set in. The disintegration made itself felt not only in the political sphere, but in the social and cultural spheres as well. South of the Vindhyas, the Deccan and the Tamil land had sharp differences, and these differences came to be consciously manifested along with the rise of dynasties with imperialistic ambitions in each of these regions. Throughout the country the tendencies towards separatism gradually gained ground and the people began to adhere more and more to local tastes and prejudices. A conscious regional outlook emerged as a consequence and came to occupy a prominent place in the life and culture of the people. In the political sphere the tendencies towards separatism were clearly reflected in the growth of the regional states, often in conflict with one another, thereby bringing the regional factors to great prominence. All-India consciousness became rather vague, if not dimmed to a large extent. This regional spirit prevailed naturally in the cultural spheres too and that explains why the period is marked by the emergence of regional languages, each with an abundant literature, regional scripts and, to a certain extent, regional diversities in the beliefs and creeds within the principal religious systems. In the field of plastic art this regional outlook led to the growth of provincial schools of sculpture which, though the process seems to have been long in operation, became clearly manifest about the middle of the eighth century AD.

In Āryāvarta the Gupta classical ideal disintegrated after its

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supreme outburst in the unearthly creations of Sarnath of the sixth century AD. For about a century and a half plastic art in Āryāvarta remained in a state of stupor. The classical ideal declined as a consequence, and with the decline of the classical norm local predilections gradually came to the fore leading to the formation of the regional schools. The story of the art movement in the south—in the Deccan and the Tamil land—is, however, to a certain extent different. In both the regions there were momentous productions illustrating the fulfilment and final achievement of the earlier autochthonous trends after a certain rarification of such trends in the Gupta classical phase. Ultimately, however, local trends also made themselves felt in the art of the South.

1. Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley

In the seventh century plastic art in Āryāvarta follows, more or less, a routine course. It is a matter of fact continuation, so to say, of the achievements of the past century. But the mental and aesthetic consciousness that lay behind the sublime creations of Sarnath had become dulled and came to be felt less and less intensely. Even the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley, that had been the centre of the highly intellectual Sarnath idiom, shows signs of numbness in respect of artistic practices. The idiom had reached its apogee in the preceding century and had exhausted all its possibilities. The classical ideal had reached its goal. What more could the artists of the subsequent generation do but to linger "in reminiscences of the past," to quote the beautiful expression of Kramrisch ?[63]

A mechanical repetition leads to a position in which the style becomes formal and, consequently, artificial. With increasing stylisation, the soft and sensitively modelled form of almost unbearable grace and refinement, held together by a flowing and melting contour, ultimately disintegrates. Gradually, there prevails a general heaviness of form coupled with a coarseness of treatment. In the heavy and coarsened plastic texture there can be seen neither the expression of spiritual illumination, nor the beauty of definition that characterised the earlier works. A "brooding heaviness", as Kramrisch[64] calls it, grips the form.

Even the sculptures from Sarnath, which may be assigned to this period, bear these traits. The physical type, though descended from

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the ideal of the preceding century, grows heavier, but without the dynamic content of the Deccanese tradition. With increasing heaviness there is also noticed a certain lack of definition. Further, there is no idea of spiritual abstraction that distinguished the earlier works. The sculptures betray a progressive schematisation in which the distinctive import of the idiom is gradually being submerged. In respect of the images of the Buddha a new attitude, that of *pralambapāda-āsana*, is introduced.[65] This attitude is calculated, perhaps, to endow the figures with a certain amount of relaxation, in contrast to the highly concentrated attitude of *vajra-paryaṅka*. Even such relaxed attitude does in no way compensate for the drowsiness that seems to have overtaken the form. In the eighth century a firm linear discipline is recaptured. This tightens up the modelling, thereby arresting the process of disintegration before it could go far.

In Mathurā and in its sphere of influence as well a similar process may be seen to have been at work. The lower part of a female figure from Mathurā (fig. 76) and an image of Padmapāṇi from Sankisa (both in the Indian Museum, Calcutta), each with its smooth and refined texture and assignable to the seventh century, represent possibly the last remnants of the Gupta plastic ideal in this region.[66] In the latter the modelling as well as the linear content already show symptoms of disintegration. In a few images from Mathurā, like those of Sarasvatī, Pañchika and Hāritī and a Nāga couple (all in the Indian Museum, Calcutta), belonging to a slightly later date, the mediaeval traits are fully manifested.

2. Eastern India

Even in the best days of classical sculpture the abstraction of the Sarnath idiom had been less intensely felt in Eastern India. The eastern version of the classical idiom, distinguished, as we have seen (*ante*. pp. 143-147), by a certain degree of emotionalism and sensuousness, failed to attain the soaring heights reached by the sublime creations of Sarnath. In spite of its contact with the Sarnath idiom, the eastern trend had its moorings on this earth and this was not without an advantage either. In the seventh century this trend appears to remain potent in all its consistency, perhaps because of its more human appeal. To the seventh century belong a few sculptures of which the dates can be ascertained with a certain amount of definiteness.

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Besides, there are several which may be assigned to this period stylistically.

Among the dated and dateable sculptures mention should first be made of the Cleveland Museum bronze image of the Buddha bearing a date which, according to one reading, is 313.[67] Referred to the Gupta era (very likely on palaeographical considerations), the date would correspond to AD 632-33. The emotional and sensuous content of the figure would suggest its Eastern Indian origin. The second is a black chlorite image of Chakrapurusha (*Chakra* personified of Vishṇu), discovered from Aphsaḍ (Bihar) and now in the Cleveland Museum of Art (U.S.A.).[68] On circumstantial evidence it may be referred to the period of Ādityasena, a late Gupta ruler of Magadha whose known date is AD 672. The third is a metal image of Sarvāṇī (a form of Durgā) found at Chauddagram (Comilla district, Bangla Desh), which, according to the inscription that it bears, was covered with leaves of gold (i.e. gilt) under the patronage of queen Prabhāvatī, wife of king Devakhaḍga who is known to be ruling in East Bengal in the latter half of the seventh century.[69] With this was found also a metal image of Sūrya which apparently belongs, again, to this age.[70] These images possess, hence, the rare advantage of being dated with a certain degree of definiteness and may be considered to be illustrative of the style of Eastern Indian sculpture of the seventh century.

As in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley, in Eastern India too there may be recognised a dimming of the classical concept along with an increasing stylisation of form. The Cleveland Buddha may be seen to be continuing the eastern version of Sarnath classicism in a mechanical manner, more or less, together with a general heaviness of form and loss, in a certain measure, of spiritual import of the latter. The face, instead of being ovoid, is squarish and the sharp-cut eyes with heavy eyelids betoken a sleepy look rather than the inlook of deep concentration. The modelling, however, is held within disciplined contours. The same characteristics apply also to the Cleveland Chakrapurusha. Certain groups of stone sculptures appearing on the basement of the colossal brick temple at Paharpur (Rajshahi district, Bangla Desh)[71] may also be assigned to this phase on consideration of style. In a few of these, for instance, the panel showing an amorous couple (erroneously described as Rādhā and Kṛishṇa)[72] and that with the figure of the river goddess Yamunā,[73] the refined trend of the

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eastern version is fully valid. The smooth and suave contours define, in each case, a slender form, undoubtedly sensitive in modelling, but not exactly in the manner of Sarnath. The general tendency, however, is towards a heaviness of form,[74] as in the rest of Āryāvarta. But the plastic texture may still be found to be retaining the subtleties of sensitive modelling and definitive contours. One of the most eminent productions of the eastern trend of this phase may be seen in the figure of a lady with a parrot on a jamb from Sakri Gali (Bhagalpur district, Bihar; fig. 78). In the soft and well-modulated youthful feminine form one may recognise a charming combination of the plastic ideals of the Gupta classical norm with the graceful and vivacious sensuousness of its eastern version. The ideal beauty of the female form, so eloquently epitomised by Kālidāsa, the greatest of our classical poets, seems to have its plastic counterpart in this elegant sculpture from Bihar. Nālandā, which has usually been described as the spiritual extension of Sarnath, has also supplied several notable sculptures of this phase, in stone,[75] stucco (fig. 77) and metal (fig. 79, 80), and such sculptures are found to be touched also by the warm caress of the emotional eastern trend.

The metal image of Sarvāṇī from Chauddagram (Comilla district, Bangla Desh), dateable in the second half of the seventh century, is interesting as introducing a new direction in respect of stela formation, especially in metal figures. The principal figure is framed within an oval aureole. The eight hands of the goddess, spreading sideways, serve to attach the aureole to the main figure, while additional struts, sometimes with decorative patterns, help further to fix the aureole firmly to the figure. The Sūrya image from the same place had possibly such an aureole, as indicated by the remains of the struts. Several metal images from Nālandā (figs. 76, 77) also exhibit aureoles with similar attachments, the edges of the aureoles being further decorated at intervals with flame patterns. A miniature metal image of Śiva from Manir Tat (Sunderbuns, West Bengal)[76] is, again, provided with an aureole similarly fixed, but in a manner that anticipates the future stela composition in Pāla sculptures of the mediaeval phase. Occasional flame patterns edging the aureoles of the above Nālandā images may suggest also the beginnings of the *prabhāvali* (aureole of flames), characteristic of sculptures of the Pāla school. In this group of metal sculptures from Eastern India there may be recognised a certain degree of

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coarseness in treatment, although there is no lack of definitive modelling or of the emotional content of the eastern trend. But the refinement of the classical ideal appears to be getting thinner.

Mention should be made in this context of a second group of Paharpur sculptures[77] in which the plastic traits of the Gupta classical norm are found to be much subdued and the sensuous and emotional import of the eastern trend generalised and rarified to a certain extent. A third group of Paharpur sculptures,[78] belonging to a period outside the scope of the present section, fully illustrates the strength and vitality of an autochthonous art idiom with its dynamic and emotional content. It seems to represent an art of the people, naive and vivacious in an extreme measure. Although the execution is crude and coarse, the powerful compositions are of great aesthetic and social significance. Unaffected by any sophistication, this idiom is truly human in its appeal and seems to have deeper roots. Seldom has such an idiom found expression in stone. The proper vehicle of such an idiom must certainly have been clay and terracotta that have been the popular medium of artistic expression with the common folk since very early days. The long dados of terracotta plaques adorning the walls of this colossal brick temple[79] illustrate in an abundant manner the working of this popular and autochthonous art idiom in terracotta, and the third group of stone sculptures at Paharpur appears to constitute a parallel projection of a popular plastic tradition in a higher medium. It is true, the terracotta plaques and stone sculptures of this group do not belong to the phase under discussion, but are contemporaneous with the date of the temple which was erected in the time of Dharmapāla sometime about the close of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth. But they presuppose certainly earlier plastic pursuits in this popular idiom, specimens of which are not extant now.

The Paharpur sculptures of the second group, referred to above, may be assigned to the seventh century. Although contemporaneous with the other Eastern Indian sculptures of this phase, they present an idiom that is essentially different. In this second group of Paharpur sculptures there is hardly anything left of the plasticity and lyricism of the Gupta classical ideal. The refined sensuousness of its eastern version is evident in a generalised manner only. These sculptures imply a style removed from the Gupta classical norm and from its

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eastern version as well, but nearer to what comes to be known as the Pāla with the rise of this dynasty to political power in Eastern India about the middle of the eighth century. In plastic content, as well as in import and iconography, these sculptures may reasonably be considered to be the precursors of the conventional Pāla images of the subsequent period. The sculptures in stone and metal, noted above, along with the second group of stone sculptures at Paharpur, signify a gradual movement that ultimately leads to the emergence of the Pāla school of sculpture of the early mediaeval days. Their connection with the Gupta classical norm is evident, in spite of the modifications that have taken place in the body-type, which is derived certainly from that source. At the same time an impact of the popular indigenous idiom is noticeable in a general heaviness and coarseness of plastic texture. The popular indigenous idiom represents an art of dynamic action, while the intention of the Gupta classical concept is to express a spirit of calm and contemplative repose. It is the meeting of two opposing ideals in the sphere of plastic art that ultimately leads to the creation of the hieratic Pāla school of sculpture. The transition from the classical to the mediaeval phase is a gradual process, and in Eastern India this process is, perhaps, more clearly discernible than in any other region.

3. Central India

In the vast stretch of territory below the Gangetic plains, plastic remains, so far known of this phase, are few and far between. There are sufficient indications, however, of wide-spread artistic activities scattered throughout the different parts of the modern state of Madhya Pradesh. The impetus to temple-building activity, noticed since the Gupta period, must have been accompanied by plastic practices. A proper and systematic exploration of the entire tract, long overdue, is expected to bring to light many new and important material for a study of Indian temple architecture in its formative stage, as well as for a better understanding of Indian sculpture in the phase of transition from the classical norm to the mediaeval.

In the earlier phase plastic art in this region, though generally sharing the disciplined rhythm of the Gupta classical ideal, is characterised by a relatively broad and terse modelling and sturdier form. The latter seems to be an inheritance from an early plastic diction,

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autochthonous in this region, on which Gupta plastic ideals react, but only in a lesser degree. To the Gupta classical idiom may be attributed the linear discipline felt in varying measures in such sculptures and, also, a certain differentiation in modelling. The few known sculptures that may be assigned to the seventh and early eighth centuries, such as the Mātṛikā figures from Bheraghat (Jabalpur district)[80] or figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas from Sanchi,[81] signify a gradual disintegration of definitive contours together with a certain coarsening of treatment. These are, no doubt, the tendencies of the post-Gupta trends in the whole of Āryāvarta. With a slowing down of Gupta classicism the autochthonous trends seem to assert themselves again. Heavy and spreading forms with a condensed plasticity appear to distinguish the art of Central India of this phase. In a few, for example, in the bust of a female figure in the Gwalior Museum[82] or in the carvings of the Rajīvalochana temple at Rajim (fig. 82), Gupta classical flavour still appears to be immanent. In plasticity and sinuous rhythm the latter seem to recall the sculptural decor of the Bhumara temple and of the lintel from Pawaya of the previous epoch. In general, however, with increasing sturdiness of form along with a terseness of plastic texture the sculpture of Central India of the post-Gupta phase appears to betoken a feeling akin, in a certain measure, to that of contemporary Deccan.

4. Western India

In the west, in Rajasthan and Gujarat few examples of sculpture are extant now of the post-Gupta phase; but whatever records are available indicate a plastic trend not far removed from that of Central India. In this region also in the sculptures of this phase the same sturdiness of form with a condensed plastic texture constitutes the mainstay of the style. Occasionally, there may be recognised suavity and facility of contours that endow the sturdy figures with a certain kind of warmth smoothly gliding all over the surface. This is evident in the figures of the attendant divinities of the image of Mahāvīra at Nadia in South Rajasthan (fig. 81). Some of the bronze images of the Akota hoard (Baroda, Gujarat) may be assigned to the post-Gupta phase of plastic activities in this region. One eminent piece represents Jīvantasvāmī, *i.e.* of Mahāvīra prior to his becoming the twenty-fourth and last Tīrthaṅkara of the Jainas (fig. 83). The body is sturdily

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built in accordance with the prevailing fashion of the age. But the tendency to disintegration of the classical concept seems to have been held in check by smooth and firm contours as well as by a definitive modelling. The treatment of the head is, to a certain extent, reminiscent of the Gupta classical concept.

Northwards, certain wooden reliefs from Brahmor (Chamba)[83] appear also to be allied to the Central Indian trend of the post-Gupta phase. A few metal images from Chamba,[84] belonging to the close of the seventh century or the beginning of the eighth and characterised by linear sharpness, are already mediaeval in content as well as in import. The same observation applies also to the metal image of Sūrya from Kashmir (now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, U.S.A.),[85] which belongs possibly to the early eighth century.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, as outlined above, an increasing desiccation of the Gupta classical ideal takes place in the artistic practices throughout Āryāvarta leading to the emergence of the mediaeval concept. Every region, however, furnishes exceptions to the general trend. The process of transition from the classical to the mediaeval is slow and gradual. In regions where remains are abundant it is possible to trace this process in greater details; in others where records are not abundant enough to allow such a study, the destined course can only be indicated.

5. Deccan

In the seventh and eighth centuries the momentous outburst of artistic genius in the South presents an emphatic contrast to the general state of torpor that had seized and overwhelmed plastic activities in Āryāvarta. In the Deccan as well as in the Tamil land a heightened aesthetic consciousness leads to an ultimate fruition of the earlier autochthonous heritages.

Artistic activities of this phase in the Deccan are largely of the rock-cut order. The rock-cut trend, recognised in a rather primitive, yet distinctive, fashion at Bhaja, is seen to unfold its possibilities at Udayagiri and Badami and to reach its final creative perfection in the caves at Ellora, Aurangabad and Elephanta. "With rocks as the material and caves as the setting for sculptures"[86] the potentialities

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of this distinctive trend are fully explored. Dynamic compositions, a single one sometimes extending from wall to wall, cover the surface with multitudinous forms.[87] Some of the caves that are to be discussed in this context may fall outside the scope of this section chronologically. All are, however, treated together in order to understand better the finale of this grand expression.

The Brahmanical caves at Ellora, like Rāvaṇa Kā Khāi (No. XIV),[88] Daśāvatāra (No. XV),[89] Rāmeśvara (No. XXI)[90] and Ḍhūmar Leṇā (No. XXIX),[91] contain outstanding pieces of sculptures, assignable roughly to the seventh century, which illustrate the rock-cut trend at the height of its expression. The themes, mostly drawn from the mythology of the great god Śiva, are conceived each on an epic scale and grandeur. The physiognomical form in each case is broad and heavy, as in Badami works of the previous phase. Nevertheless, a more differentiated modelling, soft in rounded volume and plasticity and refined contours (fig. 84), apparently classical in flavour except for agitated tension, may be found to qualify all Ellora works generally. A dynamic energy permeates each figure and seems to transcend the limits of the physical frame. In compositions expressing powerful actions and movements this energy appears to be accumulated and stored up in certain parts of the body in accordance with its attitudes, flexions and gestures (fig. 85, 86). Condensed and localised though, the energy spreads through the mighty physique and radiates even beyond its limits by the inherent dynamism of the rock-cut trend.

In Ellora carvings the sacred myths have been described with vivid and dramatic force, and gods and goddesses seem to live and act. No longer do the figures appear steeped in absorption, as at Badami. An animated consciousness of the vital functions infuse each of them with life that surges within. The figures awake to their surrounding and expand to the moods and actions appropriate to the themes (fig. 88). No longer do the myths appear as mere inert symbols. They are rendered with telling sincerity, grace and vehemence due to the nature and character of the themes. It would not be wrong to say that at Ellora we have living and masterful portrayals of the sacred lore of Hinduism.

The relief-panels, as a rule, are embedded in the deepest recesses of the interior walls (fig. 89), flanked, moreover, at the sides by heavy

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pilasters (fig. 85-86, 88). They are thus set back into the depths of two-fold recesses, each panel confronting the light and space as available in the interior. As a result, light and darkness play with equal liveliness on the reliefs which seem to emerge towards space in a slightly diagonal direction. The plastic conception and its setting thus appear to be integrally related, and it is this relation that lends a character and significance to the carvings of the Ellora caves.

This relation seems to have been more largely exploited in the reliefs of a cave at Aurangabad (No. III). Though Buddhist in theme, the reliefs are characterised by the same plastic and compositional concepts that distinguish the Brahmanical reliefs at Ellora. Two groups of worshippers,[92] carved almost in the round against two lateral walls, kneel facing the figure of the Buddha shown enthroned against the middle wall. With luminously dark body, each figure with an individual expression of 'expectant prayer and devotional surrender,' seems to draw within itself every human votary who enters the shrine for adoration. "This intimacy of the object of devotion and concentration, the stone effigies of the worshippers, and the living bodies of those who may enter, is the widest possible application to which plastic conception of volume lends itself with the help of modelling and of light and darkness."[93]

In the eighth century the cave style continues in the Deccan and records remarkable achievements in the grand conception of the Kailāsa temple at Ellora and in the grottoes of Elephanta in the island of Gharapuri off the coast of Bombay. But the full import and significance of these works cannot be satisfactorily comprehended and understood without a familiarity with the contemporary temple sculptures in this part of the country. In southern Deccan since the previous epoch notable experiments were being made in structural forms, and these, along with contemporaneous cave excavations in northern Deccan, supply an authentic picture of an intense artistic impulse that pervaded the entire territory. In this phase also, like cave excavations in northern Deccan, temple-building activity in southern Deccan continues, and the extant monuments at such places as Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal, Mahakuta and Alampur furnish important landmarks in the history of Indian temple architecture. Exuberant sculptural works embellish these temples; the plastic style, however, registers a tradition that seems to stand apart from that of

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the cave reliefs. The difference is best illustrated by a comparison of the rock-cut panels at Badami with the reliefs in the Aihole temples, both approximately contemporaneous in date (*ante.* pp.150,152). A few of the seventh century sculptures at Aihole are seen to continue the style of the sixth century (fig. 87), but in the eighth distinct transformations seem to have occured in the style of the temple sculptures of this region. A few Aihole sculptures (fig. 90) and some sculptures in the temples at Alampur (fig. 91) of early eighth century date appear to connote a blending, though not yet an integrated one, of two seemingly opposing ideals: the heavy physiognomical form, characteristic of the rock-cut idiom, as evidenced at Badami, in impact with the slender and elegant physique, apparently a heritage of Veṅgī in the ultimate analysis. It is to be noted that Aihole sculptures of the previous phase (*ante.* p. 152) derive from this latter tradition, rarified, in a certain degree, by the Gupta classical ideal. It is this tradition which spreads southwards and moulds, in a large measure, the distinctive Pallava idiom, to be described presently. The Pallava idiom, in its turn, reverberates to the north and imparts to sculpture of southern Deccan, from the second quarter of the eighth century onwards, a new sense of form. Every student of Indian history is aware how Vikramāditya II, the Chālukya ruler of the Deccan, was impressed with the Pallava monuments of Kāñchīpuram. He is also said to have brought artists from the south for the artistic projects in his own territory. The result was the expansion of the southern Pallava idiom to the north in Chālukyan territory. Pattadakal rises into prominence about this time and among the temple sculptures of this phase the foremost are those of the Virūpāksha[91] and the Mallikārjuna[95] temples at this place. As a consequence of the contact with the Pallava idiom temple sculpture in lower Deccan, while shedding off some of the heaviness of the early eighth century, retains, nevertheless, powerful bodies distinguished by a slender suppleness and easy and graceful movements (figs. 92-97). But the combination of the two idioms, the Chālukyan and the Pallava, seems yet to be vague and faltering.

In the magnificent carvings of the rock-cut temple of Kailāsa at Ellora the two trends are found to reach a creative synthesis. Before we pass on to these achievements it may be useful to mention a few temple sculptures of southern Deccan in order to illustrate the trends

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in the seventh-eighth century. The image of Durgā Mahishamardinī from Aihole (fig. 87), apparently of the seventh century, seems to recall in its slender and supple, and at the same time, full physiognomy the sixth century tradition, although there is noticed already a tendency to a certain heaviness of form. This style is clearly distinguished from that of early eighth century works at Aihole (fig. 90) and Alampur (fig. 91) with their broad, heavy and spreading forms and not too refined texture. The earlier mode seems to have been recaptured in such sculptures as the Brahmā from Hachchappaya Gudi at Aihole (fig. 92) and now in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay. The sculptures in the mid-eighth century temples at Pattadakal, like those on the Virūpāksha (figs. 93-94), the Pāpanātha (fig. 95) and the Mallikārjuna (fig. 96) betray a distinct Pallava flavour on the Chālukyan tradition of the earlier epoch. The pillar relief in the *maṇḍapa* of the Mallikārjuna temple (fig. 97) with an almost silhoutte-like appearance illumined by sharp passages of darkness recalls, again, the open-air epic relief of Kirātārjunīya episode at Mamallapuram.

The Kailāsa at Ellora has justly been regarded as a supreme creation of human endeavour in the boldness of its conception and in the magnificence of its execution. The vast temple complex, completely hewn out of the rock as it is, seems to have been a fitting sanctuary for the god Śiva whose favourite abode is the Kailāsa mountain. Superb carvings, depicting the myths and legends associated with the god and stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* cover all the free surfaces of the monument. Conceived with an epic grandeur and treated with an attitude and felicity rarely met with, they constitute collectively one of the most outstanding achievements of Indian art.

"In these," observes Kramrisch,[96] "the southern element is absorbed by the tradition of the Dekkhan. The slender type of the body, with its easier and quickened gestures, is assimilated by the heavier form of the Dekkhan with its sustained power." A happy and perfect fusion of two distinctive currents, one of an animated dynamism sustained by powerful forms and the other of easy and conscious grace, leads to mighty compositions that break forth in movements, forceful and often tumultuous in the intensity of expression. A dynamic energy, pent-up and potent in its forebodings in the previous phase, now releases, itself in portentous actions and gestures.

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In every theme it is the supreme psychological moment, either of elation or of abandon, that has been chosen for representation and rendered with a vehemence that has seldom been equalled. A fleeting gesture, caught at the moment of its highest tempo, becomes transformed into an eternal sign for the supreme fact of a particular myth or a divine act. Every mood, be it the exaltation of the dance of Śiva Naṭarāja,[97] the fury of Śiva Bhairava,[98] the terrific speed of flight through the air,[99] the force of destruction[100] or the sweet instinct of love and affection, has been expressed with appropriate and consummate sincerity. In these superb and masterful carvings the drama of life itself, as it were, has been presented in its varied facets. Innumerable are the themes and subjects depicted on the Kailāsa temple and no description, however eloquent, is adequate enough to convey properly an idea of the various forces and experiences of life rendered in terms of divine myths and legends.

Among the many fine and bold reliefs a few may be briefly noted here by way of illustration. There is the portrayal of a couple clasping each other in tight embrace. Rene Grousset[101] considers this motif, which he describes as that of the 'kiss,' to be "one of the most powerful works in the art of the whole world." In a masterly fashion the artist has depicted here a joyous and idyllic rapture as well as a carefree abandon, in the intensity of the moment so to say. The monumental scene of the Rākshasa king Rāvaṇa's attempt to dislodge the mount Kailāsa,[102] the abode of Śiva, is, again, a forceful and felicitous rendering of a divine myth. The moods and actions represented are varied and every one has been faithfully portrayed. In the lower half of the composition we find the Rākshasa king trying to uproot the mountain and the titanic effort required for such a cosmic upheaval is embodied in his twenty arms shown in concentrated energy. The mountain, it seems, feels the tremor of the violence, and the goddess agitatedly shrinks and clutches at her lord, while a maid is seen taking to flight. But the god keeps serene and unmoved and sets order in the turmoil by the simple gesture of pressing down a foot. Admirable in its breadth and powerful in the visualisation of the widest possible varieties of moods and sentiments with equal felicity, this rock-cut composition stands unrivalled for its dramatic vigour and quality in the presentation of an epic theme.

A detailed and differentiated modelling that characterises each

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figure is, no doubt, responsible, to a great extent, for much of the effect achieved in these superb carvings. In respect of modelling the rock-cut tradition of the Deccan absorbs the Pallava idiom of the south, which governs the physiognomical form. This fact is best illustrated in the figures of Śiva and Pārvatī and in those of the river goddesses in the entrance porch of the complex. These with their tall and slender proportions recall those of the rock-cut *rathas* of Mamallapuram. Again, as Kramrisch[103] admirably puts, "depth and darkness are parcelled out according to the demands of psychological suggestiveness with which the artist invests each single figure." The emotional effect is emphasised by a careful and conscious manipulation of space, light and shade. The action is set in a deep box-like hollow from the darkness of which the figures seem to emerge according to the depth of the relief which, again, is graded into a number of planes by receding cuts. Such graduations are determined by the requirements of psychological differentiation, each mood and each sentiment being described in its appropriate setting according to varying degrees of intensity and arranged in accordance with the direction of forthcoming. It is this masterly disposition of the various elements of the composition that lends elaborate dramatic effect to each relief as a whole. The rock-cut Deccanese tradition, after centuries of experience, reaches the highest state of accomplishment in the supreme carvings of the monolithic Kailāsa temple at Ellora.

Perhaps the last great achievement of cave sculpture in the Deccan is to be found in the spectacular carvings in the grottoes of Elephanta,[104] an island situated not far from Bombay. Unaffected by the Pallava idiom of the south, the autochthonous heritage in rock-cut plastic tradition reaches a supreme perfection in mighty forms, solid and rounded in volumes and almost elemental in their bearings. Weighty and massive bodies, as if swelling from within, carry the notion of an exuberant vigour, dignified as well as dynamic in content, but serene and sublimated in secret exaltation of divine power. The modelling, in each case, is simple and, to a great extent, generalised; yet what a momentous idea of dynamism, coupled with that of deepest absorption in the joy of existence, is suggested in the heavy and powerful forms contained within firm and pure outlines! The giant sculpture of the Śivaite trinity (fig. 99), set at the end of the nave within the cave shrine, has been the subject of much discussion with regard to its

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iconographic import and significance. The question of identification, however, seems to be of little consequence when one faces this awe-inspiring creation and is overwhelmed by it. The all-powerful and mysterious godhead seems to emerge from an 'unlimited and nebulous darkness,[105] in the majesty of his august serenity (central face), wrathful energy (right face) and calm and reposeful sweetness (left face which, according to text, stands for the face of Umā, his consort—*Umā vaktra)*. By its powerful form, distinguished by a sublimity of spiritual expression, it represents the supreme height of India's aesthetic vision.

The panels subsidiary to this central theme are distributed in the interior 'like so many Stations of the Cross' and are no less effective. These panels have suffered most from the vandalism of the Portuguese predatories in the sixteenth century. The subsidiary panels are devoted each to a depiction of a significant theme in the legend of Śiva Mahādeva and despite mutilations, one may recognise here also a successful realisation of the theme in respect of the aesthetic vision and its effective visualisation. What a dynamic energy pervades the panel in Elephanta depicting Śiva's *tāṇḍava* dance (fig. 101), a dance in which, according to Hindu philosophy, all fetters are broken! Equally effective are the presentations of the themes lyrical and peaceful. One may cite, for instance, the panel showing the Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī.[106] The same theme has been presented also by the Ellora artists (fig. 88), more or less, in a like manner and an equal degree of intensity. Benjamin Rowland[107] recognises in the Elephanta panel "a timeless scene of bliss, ... a scene of complete tranquillity and peace," . . . . . in which "the mood of untramelled, ideal love is enhanced by every aspect of pose and gesture—the tenderness with which Śiva turns to his consort, and the gentle swaying of Pārvatī's youthful body."

In the colossal panels of Elephanta the autochthonous rock-cut mode, which has a history of nearly one thousand years, may be said to have reached its supreme and final destiny.

6. Tamil Land

An artistic movement of great consequence flourished in Tamil land under the aegis of the Pallava rulers of Kāñchī who emerged as the dominant power in the south in the seventh century. Their

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dominions included parts of the old Andhra country and the movement inaugurated by them may be seen to have imbibed and carried on the traditions of the earlier Veṅgī school (*ante.* pp. 83-92). Mahendravarman Pallava (*c.* AD 600-630), one of the most remarkable figures in the history of Tamilian civilisation, was a great patron of the arts. His many-sided accomplishments are evidenced in the multiplicity of titles by which he was known: *vichitra-chitta* (myriad-minded), *chetthakari* (temple-builder), *chitrakārappuli* (tiger among the artists), etc. This highly gifted monarch initiated a vigorous and significant art movement in the south. In his time were excavated many cave shrines which seem to represent an innovation in this region.[108] His son, Narasiṁhavarman Mahāmalla, ushered in a new direction, along with cave excavations, by shaping free-standing monolithic shrines *(rathas)* from granulitic boulder-like outcrops at Mamallapuram (Mahābalipuram), the sea-port city founded by him about thirty-five miles down the coast from Madras. These activities under the father and the son were attended also by eminent sculptural works in the caves and the *rathas*, and the gigantic open-air rock-cut presentation of the epic myth of *Kirātārjunīya* was also a remarkable production of this phase. These significant works of the Pallava phase supply the foundations of the subsequent *Drāviḍa* sculpture.

The Veṅgī school continued to linger till the fourth century, and possibly even later. The impetuosity of the earlier productions slowly gave place in the later works to a less severe repertory of elegant and attenuated forms. It is this Veṅgī style in its later phase which the Pallavas inherited. But the Pallava sculptors could not ignore entirely the rock-cut idiom of the Deccan and the reliefs of Bhairavakonda,[109] distinguished each by a heavy physiognomical form, bear the impress of the contemporary Deccanese tradition. The contribution of the Veṅgī school, however, principally determined the character of the Pallava style. The Pallava sculptures, says Benjamin Rowland,[110] "retain the extremely graceful attenuation of the forms at Amarāvatī, and are animated by the same feeling for movement and emotionally expressive poses and gestures." While this is true with regard to the physiognomical form, extremely slender and elongated in plastic content, the figures themselves seem to be more disciplined in Pallava sculpture; the vehemence and intensity of the emotional frenzy of the earlier inheritance may be seen to have thinned down a good

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deal. At least this is so when the figures are presented in an architectural context.

At Mamallapuram the noble theme of *Kirātārjunīya*[111] has been carved in high relief covering the entire face of a cliff, approximately ninety feet in length and twenty-three feet in height (fig. 100). It is a fine delineation of an epic myth conceived and composed on an epic scale. One may have an idea of the scale of this colossal undertaking not only from the vast space occupied by the scene, but also from the fact that 'the scores of the figures of men and animals, including those of the family of elephants, are represented in life size'. They fully participate, with the intensity of their beings, so to say, in the rendering of the myth in all its grandeur. No artificial frame or boundary delimits, in any manner, the composition which rushes over the surface as far as the rock permits. Here the rock itself has become the material, every feature of which has, including the vertical cleft, been ingenuously utilised to suit the needs of this grand theme. One is reminded of similar earlier conceptions at Bhaja and Udayagiri (*ante.* pp.58-59, 142-143); but here at Mamallapuram the rock concept attains a supreme expression in which the entire mass of the rock, as Kramrisch[112] quite correctly observes, "allows itself to be organised into relief." The vast and illimitably expansive composition includes within its fold a complete world, of men and animals, of gods and ascetics, of Nāga deities and semi-divine beings, all in life size of (figs. 100, 102-103) as observed above. In the breadth of its composition it is a real masterpiece, a 'regular fresco in stone,' if one may be allowed to use the term. Every figure has been modelled with a loving care, and the plastic form, so supple and graceful in its slenderness and refined contours, could scarcely be improved upon. In spite of the multiplicity of figures of various kinds crowding the composition, everything is balanced and well-integrated. There is no idea of vehement actions and gestures, as at Ellora. A restrained movement all through lends poise and dignity to the figures, singly as well as collectively. The relief is graded in such a manner that the figures appear to be in a continuous process of emerging from the flat face of the rock. The wholesale impression is one of joy and ecstasy of existence, frank and direct in a detached manner and, therefore, the more touching. The epic delineation serves as the vehicle, not for any spiritual quest, but for depicting the joyous onrush of life in its natural surroundings and

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in its various facets.

An intense naturalism distinguishes all the figures. The aged ascetic prostrating himself in adoration before the shrine or the one practising austerities standing on one leg, the couples hovering in the air, the gods standing in their majestic dignity, the Nāgas and Nāgīs in adoration, practically the whole array of gods and men, are so amazingly naturalistic, each figure in its characteristic mood and gesture, as to have a direct appeal. The animals particularly, masterful portraits as they are, reveal the artist's sincere sympathy with and understanding of the inherent nature and character of each species. As Benjamin Rowland[113] says, "no more perfect realizations of living animal types are to be found anywhere in the sculpture of the Eastern world." Among the animal representations in this epic scene may also be found the lively caricature of the 'ascetic cat,' a motif perhaps derived from a fable of the *Pañchatantra*. "Perhaps we may even say," Rene Grousset[114] observes eloquently, "that here the Indian art of representing animals . . . reaches its height. What majesty there is in the group of elephants in adoration[115] . . . where they seem to be presiding in the name of the animal kingdom over an august mystery! What life there is in the 'ascetic cat'[116] standing on its hind legs a little further on! And what supreme elegance in the pair of deer[117] which look at the scene from a cave opposite, on the left-hand side, with the life-like action of the stag scratching his nose with his hind foot!" Moreover, the cliff is not the only one which has master-pieces to show. There is another rock-carving which has preserved for us an admirable and intensely life-like pastoral scene[118] of the milking of a cow which is licking her calf's back with a deft movement of the tongue. More amazing still is the monolithic sculptured block showing a family of monkeys (fig. 104) with the male picking vermin off the female while she suckles her two little ones:[119] here again we have a keenly observed scene, as humorous as it is realistic.

The breadth of composition that distinguishes the open-air *Kirātārjunīya* relief at Mamallapuram may also be recognised, in a certain degree, in a few other reliefs in the cave shrines. The most eminent of these is the pastoral scene in the Kṛishṇa *maṇḍapa*, already referred to. A few of the figures in this relief also seem to emerge from the rock itself, while others are set against its surface. The Mahishamardinī *maṇḍapa* has two panels depicting themes of two

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opposing concepts, each rendered with equal felicity and truthfulness. In one the great goddess Durgā fights with Mahishāsura.[120] Durgā with her host occupies the left side of the panel, while the *asura* with his army occupies the right (fig. 105). The two groups are juxtaposed, more or less, diagonally, one representing concentrated divine energy, despite supple and slender forms of the goddess and her female warriors, before which the other, *i.e.* the demon host is already seen to be retreating. The entire composition is alive with action and force, and facing this dramatic scene appears the panel of the god Viṣṇu in his eternal sleep on the coils of the serpent Śesha.[121] It is a scene of repose and deep calm (fig. 106), though tension is present in the panel in the figures of the challenging demons on the right side (not included in illustration). The theme, it should be noted, is also associated with the exploits of the great goddess as described in the *Devī-māhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. It concerns the killing of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha, an act that was accomplished by the god Viṣṇu who was awakened for this purpose from his deep sleep through the grace of the Devī. The appearance of two themes of opposing concepts, together and facing each other, may not hence be entirely irrelevant. Among other dramatic renderings may be mentioned the two reliefs in Varāha *maṇḍapa* No. II, depicting respectively Viṣṇu in his boar form rescuing the earth goddess[122] and his taking of the 'three strides' (Trivikrama),[123] each of which seems to have expressed the intensity of the act involved.

The reliefs in the *rathas* of Mamallapuram lack the vitality of the above compositions. They are set in shallow rectangular panels between two slender pilasters on two sides.[124] It is this rectangular frame, vertically set, which governs the composition of the *ratha* relief. Architectonic in context, the figures are also architectonic in character with an emphasis on verticalism enhanced as much by the tall slender forms as by the high and pointed crowns placed on the heads (fig. 107). Whatever bend the body may assume is also in accordance with the architectonic frame in which it is set. The verticalism of the frame and pilasters determines the shape, contained within a refined and disciplined outline and elongated and almost pillar-like in appearance. There is nothing of the swaying grace, as in Āryāvarta, everything being fixed by a rigid architectonic discipline. This is as much true of the male figure as of the female, of the figures shown in pairs, and

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even of groups not supposedly related to any architectural context.

The Pallava style, it has been observed already, concerns itself with a tall and slender physiognomical form, apparently an inheritance from the Veṅgī idiom of the Andhra country. The thin and elongated limbs, almost tubular in shape, enhance the tallness of the figure. The ripe sensuousness of the Veṅgī idiom, however, gradually wears thin, and is almost absent in the Pallava which emphasises a simplified and, to a certain extent, sublimated modelling (fig. 108). The bodies, nevertheless, retain their pliancy and, instead of a relaxed langour of the Veṅgī figures, a disciplined vitality permeates the Pallava. The latter is enhanced in the male figures by broad shoulders supported on an elongated torso, no longer nervy in modelling as in the Veṅgī type. The female figures, usually leaning on their male companions, are much slighter in appearance with their slender waists, narrow chests and shoulders, smaller breasts, sparse ornaments and garments and generally submissive attitudes. These qualities apply equally to figures of human as well as divine beings. There is no idea of deep or subtle experience in any of them. Reserved and dignified in appearance, the attitude expressed is characteristically impersonal. Rock-cut though, the reliefs appear on the face of the rock or in shallow caves and in shallow niches of the *rathas*. There is, hence, no deep mystery, nor intense play of light and shade, as in the contemporary caves at Ellora. Though emerging out of the formless mass of the rock, everything seems to be clear and explicit. The Mamallapuram reliefs thus seem to stand apart from the contemporary works, either in the Deccan or in Āryāvarta.

Mamallapuram sculptures seem to represent the final achievement of the classical trend in the south. In the reliefs of the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñchīpuram (eighth century) there is a further thinning down of the plastic context. But, as in Āryāvarta, a firmer outline arrests the process of disintegration and ushers in the mediaeval phase in the art of the south. The remarkable figure of Durgā (now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, U.S.A.),[125] inseparably linked up with the Pallava idiom in respect of physiognomical form, but with more subtle gradation of planes ultimately merging into the background, seems to belong to this phase.

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(viii) Terracotta

Among the abundant artistic productions of the period covered by this chapter there is a fairly large quantity of terracotta objects recovered from various ancient sites in Āryāvarta. It is desirable, hence, to include in this chapter a brief, but separate, treatment of this form of art. Such terracotta works have been found in many places. Among these, mention should be made of such sites as Harwan in Kashmir; Sahri Bahlol, Takht-i-Bahi, Jamalgarhi, etc. in the Punjab of undivided India; Hanumangarh and Bikaner in Rajasthan; Brahmanabad and Mirpur Khas in Sind; Devnimori in Gujarat; Pawaya in Madhya Pradesh; Ahichchhatra, Bhitargaon, Saheth-Maheth, Kasia, Bhita, Kosam and Rajghat in Uttar Pradesh; Basarh in Bihar; and Mahasthan, Tamluk, Bangarh, etc. in Bengal. It is evident from the above list of the findspots of the terracotta objects that they are more abundant in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā basin. The rich deposit of silt and clay of the riperian plains explains the fairly large number of terracotta remains in this region. It is significant to note that they are conspicuous by their absence in the country to the south of the Vindhyas. Being by nature fragile it is presumable that many specimens of terracotta art have heen lost. Only a fraction of the total output seems to have been preserved to us. Kālidāsa and Bāṇa, two of the great literary figures of this period, refer to artistic practices in clay and terracotta in a manner that signifies a great popularity of this form of art, at least in Northern India, in those days.

Clay and terracotta had been the vehicle of the artistic expression of the common man from time immemorial. In the period denoting the final fruition of the classical trend they remained to be so, as is evident from the abundant remains. The uses of terracotta in the life of the people have already been mentioned in connection with the treatment of this art in the previous phases (Chapter V). In the Gupta period, with the introduction of structural practices in the field of architecture, there began an increased activity in brick constructions, and the scope of terracotta art was naturally widened. Apart from the usual categories, terracotta now came to be employed in architectural decoration. Carved bricks and tiles, with vegetal and human motifs, have come from Harwan (Kashmir), Hanumangarh and Bikaner (Rajasthan), Brahmanabad and Mirpur[126] (Sind), Saheth-

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Maheth, Ahichchhatra, Bhitargaon[127] and Kasia (Uttar Pradesh), Mahasthan[128] (Bengal), and other places. Fragments of architectural decor in terracotta are also not rare during this period. Further, terracotta plaques with figures of divine and semi-divine beings, mythological scenes,[129] popular stories and incidents of everyday life were used to decorate the walls of the temples and other religious establishments. In such uses terracotta art may, to a certain extent, be compared to similar contemporary plastic practices in stone. Terracotta art is usually less sophisticated and more human, and such appearances are recognised even in the figures of the divine beings and in the representations of the divine myths, done in terracotta.

Separate images of divine beings were also fashioned in clay and terracotta, sometimes completely in the round; but these have mostly perished. Stylistically extant images seem to bear the impress of the Gupta classical tradition, but the spiritual experience appears to be less intense in the images in terracotta. Ahichchhatra has supplied some remarkable specimens of large-size terracotta images,[130] now preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi. The figures of the river goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, almost in life size, reproduce the best traditions of Gupta plastic ideals in terracotta. A few fragments, mostly detached heads, represent, again, the remnants of such terracotta images. Among these, three heads may be worth noticing. Two have come from Ahichchhatra (Uttar Pradesh), and one from Pawaya (Madhya Pradesh). One of the Ahichchhatra heads is that of a male deity, with a coiled-up *jaṭā* on the head, usually identified as Śiva. The ovoid face with a pointed chin is full of serene expression. In view of the absence of the third eye the identification cannot be considered to be certain. The Pawaya head (fig. 109) is also that of a male deity with curly hair. In spite of the dreamy look, suggested by the slightly drooping eyelids, a sensuous and more human rendering is evident in the treatment of the cheeks, lips, nostrils and chin. The second Ahichchhatra head is more felicitous in the rendering of the female face in all its alluring charms.[131] It has been identified as the head of Pārvatī, a view that appears to be justified. Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava*, describes the classic beauty of Pārvatī, and this description seems to have been faithfully visualised in this dainty terracotta head. The whole appearance is so gracefully divine! Particularly noticeable is the fine treatment of the hair with neat ringlets arranged along the tem-

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ples, and with an elaborate and richly decorated knot at the back. This elegant treatment of the hair seems to reproduce an aristocratic fashion of the age.

Terracotta art largely concerns itself with representation of the scenes of everyday life, and as such its social import appears to be immense. It is not necessary to repeat what has already been stated in this regard in an earlier chapter (Chapter V). One or two specimens of this kind in terracotta belonging to this phase may be cited by way of illustration. A terracotta medallion in the shape of a lotus flower from Mahasthan[132] (Bogra district, Bangla Desh) shows a human couple, apparently in conversation with each other. It depicts a homely and intimate scene, suggested as much by the attitudes of the figures as by the caressing gesture of the male. Rajghat (Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh) has yielded a fair variety of everyday scenes in terracotta, and they depict the daily life and pursuits of the people, aristocrat as well as commoner, in many of their facets. These pieces, it appears from the holes in the top sections, were intended for hanging on the walls as items of interior adornment of houses. Rajghat specimens are usually small in size, and among the large number of objects a fair proportion consists of detached heads in miniature.[133] The variety of coiffure treatment, presented by them, illustrate the varied fashions of the day in this respect. Stylistically these objects bear also the impress of the Gupta classical idiom in a simplified and rarified modelling that characterises each of them. What is usually termed as the Gupta classical concept in art is all-pervading, and in Āryāvarta it touches all branches and fringes of art, though in varying degrees.

NOTES

[1] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 44.
[2] *Śukranītisāra*, Chapter IV.
[3] A. N. Tagore, *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*.
[4] Rene Grousset, *Civilisations of the East*, Vol. II, *India*, pp. 146-47.

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[5] Alexander Cunningham *(Mahabodhi*, p. 53*)* refers the year to the Śaka era, while R. P. Chanda *(ASR.*, 1922-23, p. 149) refers it to the Gupta. The latter view seems to be supported by the palaeography of the inscription and style of the sculpture.

[6] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 61.

[7] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, fig. 40.

[8] S. K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture*, 1st ed., fig. 88.

[9] *Ibid.*, fig. 89.

[10] Benjamin Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, pl. 81 B.

[11] Cf. *Ibid.*, pl. 81 A.

[12] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 295.

[13] Cf. Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pt. 184 A.

[14] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 53.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[16] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[17] Rene Grousset, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-42.

[18] 1st ed., fig. 93.

[19] *Ibid.*, fig. 96.

[20] R. D. Banerji, Śiva Temple at Bhumara *(MASI.*, No. 16*)*.

[21] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 173.

[22] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 60; Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 144, pl. 87.

[23] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 177; 1st ed., fig. 97.

[24] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 178.

[25] *ASR.*, 1924-25, p. 165, pl. XLIII, c & d.

[26] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, figs. 56-58; 1st ed., fig. 99.

[27] *Ibid.*, fig. 91; A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 162.

[28] Cf. Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 62.

[29] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 167.

[30] 1st ed., fig. 120.

[31] Cf. Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit* , pl. 86 B.

[32] *Lalit Kalā*, No. 12, pp. 16-20, pls.

[33] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 68.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

[35] K. N. Dikshit, Excavations at Paharpur *(MASI.*, No. 55*)*; S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., pp. 81-96, figs. 29-36.

[36] *ASR.*, 1911-12, pp. 161-66, pls. LXXIII-LXXV.

[37] According to recent views *(Artibus Asiae*, XXVI, 2, p. 118; *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, February, 1970, p. 55) the copper Buddha from Sultanganj has been assigned to a date midway between Gupta and Pāla, *circa* early eighth century. Such views stress too much on the appearance on this figure of parallel curving incisions, suggestive of the folds of the drapery, and their supposed resemblance to those on some Nālandā bronzes of Pāla date. The resemblance, it should be noted, is only superficial. The curved incisions on the Nālandā bronzes

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may be found to have a disturbing and, at the same time, a petrifying effect on the modelling beneath, whereas those on the Sultanganj Buddha are rendered so unobtrusively that they reveal and illumine the classical modelling which, again, is fully valid in its metaphorical content. The figure is equivalent to the fifth century stone Buddhas of Sarnath, not only in stance and physiognomical treatment but also in spiritual import, humanised, in a certain measure, by the emotionalism of the eastern version of Sarnath classicism. The arguments for a later date of the image do not appear to be convincing.

[38] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 67.

[39] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 176; 1st ed., fig. 105.

[40] *ASR.*, 1911-12, pp. 161-66, pls. LXXIII-LXXV.

[41] S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., pp. 23-24, fig. 5.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 24, fig. 8.

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25, fig. 9.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-30, fig. 7.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[46] *ASR.*, 1924-25, pl. XXXII.

[47] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 166.

[48] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 61.

[49] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 168; 1st ed., fig. 110.

[50] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, pp. 173-76, fig. 66; 1st ed., fig. 115.

[51] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sulpture*, p. 70.

[52] R. D. Banerji, Bas Reliefs of Badami (*MASI.*, No. 25).

[53] *Ibid.*, pl. XVII a.

[54] *Ibid.*, pls. XVI, IX a; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 67.

[55] Cf. 1st ed., fig. 102.

[56] Some of the bracket figures in the verandah of Cave No. IV at Badami are characterised by elegant modelling and swaying contours with a preference for refined and attenuated forms (Cf. *MASI.*, No. 25, pls. XIX a, XX, a, c; Heinrich Zimmer, *Art of Indian Asia*, pls. 130-31). A few ceiling panels are found to be similarly treated. Such figures seem to betoken an ideal which is not far from the Gupta classical one.

[57] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 154.

[58] *Ibid.*, fig. 189; Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 74 A.

[59] R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. III, *Classical Age*, fig. 81.

[60] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 164; Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 88 B.

[61] R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 524.

[62] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, fig. 165.

[63] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 77.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[65] 1st ed., fig. 118.

[66] Another eminent sculpture of this phase, in which the Gupta classical concept is largely valid, may be seen in the image of Gaṅgā from Mathura, now in the

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Cleveland Museum of Art, U.S.A. *(Handbook of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 1966, p. 231 & fig.)

[67] *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, February, 1970, pp. 55-67, figs. 8, 12 & 13.

[68] *Handbook of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 1966, p. 232 & fig.

[69] S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., pp. 31-32; N. K. Bhattasali, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, p. 204, pl. LXX; J. C. French, *Art of the Pala Empire of Bengal*, p. 3, pl. II; R. D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, pl. I c.

[70] S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., p. 32; N. K. Bhattasali, *op. cit.*, p. 172, pl. LIX.

[71] For a general review of Paharpur sculptures: S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., pp. 37-50.

[72] *Ibid.*, fig. 10.

[73] *Ibid.*, fig. 13.

[74] *Ibid.*, fig. 11.

[75] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 83.

[76] 1st ed., fig. 127; S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, 2nd ed., fig. 6.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 65 f., figs. 18-19, 22-27.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 81 f., figs. 28-36.

[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-10, figs. 48-62.

[80] *JAS.*, Vol. XXII, p. 160.

[81] R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *op. cit.*, fig. 77.

[82] 1st ed., fig. 98.

[83] J. Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of the Chamba State*, p. 7, fig. 2.

[84] 1st ed., fig. 137.

[85] *Handbook of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 1966, p. 231 & fig.

[86] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, p. 37.

[87] The latest series of Ajanta caves belongs possibly to the seventh century. At Ellora there are three groups of caves, Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina. The earliest in the Buddhist group date from the sixth century, while excavation of the Jaina group started from about the eighth. The reliefs in the Buddhist caves of the seventh century, though distinguished by an identical plastic concept as those in the Brahmanical caves, lack the dynamic import of the latter.

[88] James Burgess, *A Guide to Elura Cave Temples*, pp. 23-25.

[89] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pls. 302-03.

[90] *Ibid.*, pls. 227-34; Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, pl. 98.

[91] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pls. 235-40.

[92] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, figs. 96-97.

[93] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 85.

[94] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, figs. 66-69; Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pls. 304-07.

[95] *Ibid.*, pls. 300-302; Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, figs. 71-72.

[96] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 86.

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[97] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pl. 223.
[98] *Ibid.*, pl. 217. [99] *Ibid.*, pl. 212. [100] *Ibid.*, pl. 210.
[101] Rene Grousset, *op. cit.*, p. 239, fig. 76; Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pl. 213.
[102] *Ibid.*, pl. 211.
[103] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 88.
[104] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pls. 248-65.
[105] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 178.
[106] *Ibid.*, pl. 120 B; Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 79.
[107] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 178.
[108] King Mahendravarman proudly describes his cave temples as composed without bricks, mortar, metal or timber *(anishṭakam asudham alauham nirmāpitam)* in the Mandapagattu inscription *(Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XVII, p. 17).
[109] Cf. A. H. Longhurst, Pallava Architecture *(MASI.*, No. 17. pt. 1), pls. XV b, XVII & XVIII a.
[110] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
[111] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pls. 272-78. It is usual to identify this vast relief as the scene of *Gaṅgāvataraṇa* or the descent of the river Gaṅgā, an ennobling theme described in great detail in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and many of the *Purāṇas*. Some scholars would describe it as 'Arjuna's Penance', the central theme of the famous *Kirātārjunīya* of the *Mahābhārata* and the subject of Bhāravi's *Mahākāvya*. T. N. Ramachandran in an illuminating article *(JISOA.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 58 f.) has discussed the iconography of this enormous relief and shown good grounds for identifying the composition with the famous *Kirātārjunīya* myth.
[112] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 79.
[113] Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
[114] Rene Grousset, *op. cit.*, p. 232.
[115] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, fig. 80; Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pl. 283.
[116] *Ibid.*, pl. 277. [117] *Ibid.*, pl. 278 a. [118] *Ibid.*, pls. 290-91, 293.
[119] *Ibid.*, pl. 278 b; Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, fig. 79.
[120] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pls. 284-85.
[121] *Ibid.*, pls. 286-287; Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, fig. 84.
[122] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pl. 282.
[123] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, fig. 85.
[124] Heinrich Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pls. 279, 281, 283.
[125] *Ibid.*, pl. 288; Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.*, pl. 116.
[126] 1st ed., fig. 114. [127] *Ibid.*, fig. 125.
[128] *Ibid.*, fig. 132. [129] *Ibid.*, fig. 128.
[130] V. S. Agrawala, Terracottas from Ahichchhatra *(Ancient India*, No. 1, 1946).
[131] 1st ed., fig. 133. [132] *Ibid.*, fig. 132. [133] *Ibid.*, figs. 129-31.

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7

MEDIAEVAL SCULPTURE

(i) Prologue

Up till the latest phase of classical art Indian sculpture admits of a common denominator which can be felt throughout the country in varying degrees in accordance with strength or otherwise of the regional trends. The decline of the classical concept is followed by an increasingly conscious emphasis on the regional factors until they assert over the classical. This happened about the middle of the eighth century AD which may be considered as marking the end of the classical and the beginning of the mediaeval phase of Indian sculpture. The classical heritage, however, was never lost sight of. It is on the foundations of the classical that the mediaeval Indian sculpture grew and developed.

The classical quality in Indian sculpture consists in what is called the plasticity of the rounded and modelled form contained within a fluid linear outline. This plasticity extends also to depth and the integration of the planes and surfaces lends an organic unity and animation to the form. With the assertion of the regional trends the classical concept recedes to a certain extent, but not in an equal degree in all the regions. In the mediaeval phase there is recognised generally a gradual thinning down of the plastic context along with a growing linear sharpness. These two lead to a gradual desiccation of the classical form, and together they constitute what is called the 'mediaeval' concept in Indian sculpture. A few scholars would like to trace the beginning of this concept to the impact of the northern linear idiom which entered India with the various foreign peoples coming from the direction of Central Asia. The fact that this linear concept

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was more emphatically expressed in the territories where there were strong influxes of such foreign peoples may lend a plausibility to this view. What is called the northern art idiom is, however, still an indeterminate factor and the question may be left open till further evidences are available.

The linear trend associated with the 'mediaeval' concept is more emphatically felt in the art of painting than in that of sculpture. Sculpture is essentially a three-dimensional art and plasticity has been the basic quality of Indian sculpture from the earliest times. As such, flatness inherent in a linear trend could have but very little appeal to the Indian sculptor. It would be wrong, hence, to suppose that the linear trend of the 'mediaeval' concept was valid for the whole of India. Its impress, again, was felt in varying degrees in the different regions. It was Western India, mainly Gujarat and Rajputana, and the Western Himalayan tracts, which recorded certain concessions to this linear trend; but in these territories its impact, again, was slow and gradual. The other regions of India remained, more or less, aloof from this linear idiom and continued to draw their inspiration from the rich legacy of the classical tradition.

As in the preceding phase, the human figure is also the pivot of mediaeval sculpture. The human figure reached its highest sublimation in the Gupta classical phase when the divine image, conceived and rendered in the shape of a human being, assumed a supra-human aspect and attained its true spiritual import. (*ante*. pp. 125-129). In this sublimation one may recognise an artist's vision and realisation of the divine concept and the intellectual process involved therein. Already, artistic norms and iconographic standards, based, no doubt, on the creations of these supreme experiences, were in a state of formation. In the mediaeval phase these were systematised into definite canons, namely, of iconographic rules, rules of proportions, etc. Indian art has always been essentially a religious art, and with the standardisation of the canons in the mediaeval phase all artistic activities came to be governed by canonical prescriptions. To an Indian the image is just a medium for meditation and concentration upon the divine principle, and this act demands that this medium, *yantra* or 'instrument' as the image is aptly called, must be endowed with the exact proportions and all the *lakshaṇas* or 'signs,' as detailed in the iconographic texts. To be considered successful or conducive to its purpose the

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image, hence, has to correspond to the rules of mathematical precision in respect of *lakshaṇas* and measurement. No longer is there any scope in this process for individual artistic experience. The result is a mechanical stylisation in accordance with the iconographic standards that were once based on the visions and realisations of the old masters. There is an abundance of output, in the north as well as in the south; but in each art province one is confronted with practically the same forms repeated endlessly. Under such conditions it is not to be expected that the mediaeval phase should produce any great sculpture; but, on the whole, the artists maintain a fairly high level of artistic excellence and skill, due, no doubt, to the accumulated tradition of the past which they received as their heritage.

As a *yantra* or 'instrument,' the image has to suggest the divine being in the totality of his presence, endowed with all his attributes and accompanied by his attendants. Such a conception demands a composition that takes the shape of a stele in which the figures are graded in a number of surfaces in accordance with their respective importance. The heights of the figures are also regulated accordingly. The principal figure, occupying the centre of the composition, is outstanding in height and in relief and faces the devotee. The stele is designed to show the divinity in all his majesty and omniscience. In form as well as in composition the images of different divinities generally resemble one another, except for the attributes and other accessories which distinguish one from another.

Art in the mediaeval phase, under conditions stated above, becomes academic in the sense that the appreciation of an image in its full import requires a knowledge and comprehension of the idea underlying it. This age is characterised by a great development of the *tantras* which permeated, in varying degrees, every important form of religion of the day. The esoteric character of the cults and religious practices remains unintelligible except to the initiated few. Mediaeval art has neither the spontaneity of early Indian art, nor the impress of spiritual illumination arising out of the supreme realisations of the artists of the classical phase—qualities that are far more universal in appeal. Mediaeval sculpture reflects truly the beliefs and practices of the period and, as such, gradually becomes more and more exclusive. Comprehensible only to a limited class of priesthood, it becomes hieratic

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in the extreme, and loses touch with the general tenor of the life of the common man.

The above comments apply generally to the innumerable cult images, found in each of the art provinces of mediaeval India, and once enshrined in the mysterious dimness of the *garbha-gṛihas* of the temples. Apart from these, the temple walls are replete with rich and varied wealth of carvings among which, again, predominate the figure sculptures. Such figure sculptures may be divided into two distinct groups. To the first category belong the accessory divinities *(pārśva-devatās, parivāra-devatās, āvaraṇa-devatās)* which are treated in much the same manner as the cult images themselves, except for slight deviations necessitated by the exigencies of their architectural context. The others are decorative in character. The decorative repertoire includes human, animal and composite motifs, as well as vegetal and floral devices, each such design having its position specified in the temple scheme. The treatment of these motifs, including the human, is less hieratic and more relaxed, unhampered, as the artists were in respect of such themes, by canonical regulations. Not unoften, there may be recognised a good deal of naivete and spontaneity as in the earlier phases of Indian art. The figure sculptures, as well as other devices, are fashioned and executed with equal care and "though the former are outstanding in height of the relief, and therefore, in conspicuousness, the latter do not stand back in wealth of motifs."[1] Among the figure sculptures it is the female form, in an endless variety of attitudes and poses *(sura-sundarīs, alasa-kaṇyās,* etc.), that recurs most frequently. Some temples have charming figures of amorous couples. In many of the art provinces the conception of female beauty repeats an ideal, nearly as full and voluptuous as in the earlier centuries of the Christian era. In purpose as well as in effect, the sculptures on the temple walls differ greatly from the cult images of the period.

In the mediaeval phase plastic movements in the different regions are clearly separated from one another. Nevertheless, all styles traverse a path that is, more or less, uniform. With their derivations from the classical idiom, as swayed by regional conditions, the provincial schools slowly move apart as the local factors came to be more and more emphasised. An increasing attention to meticulous details and a growing fondness for elaboration and ornamentation may be felt in each one of these styles as centuries pass by. Uninformed by any

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personal vision or individual experience, the artists in each province are usually found to maintain a high level of craftsmanship, and their works are distinguished generally by a mechanical grace and elegance. In the later phases, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the exaggerated tendencies towards elaboration and ornamentation lead to an overburdening in which the form itself is lost in a bewildering maze of details. The products, particularly those of the twelfth century, testify to a complete desiccation of every earlier inspiration and the failure to discover anything new. The end comes with the Islamic conquest of Northern India about the close of the twelfth century. There are exceptions, however, to this general direction in a few of the art provinces, for example, in Orissa and the Tamil land which carry on the tradition at a fairly high level for sometime longer.

The abundant output of mediaeval Indian sculpture admits, hence, of a division into a number of movements, defined according to the following geographical regions: Eastern India; Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley; Central India; Western India; Punjab, Western Himalayan tracts and Kashmir; the Deccan; and the Tamil land. Each of these regions develops a plastic style of its own, in some instances split up by certain form dialects within the territory specified. Of these, the first and the last are more well known, not only on account of the abundance of remains, but also because they are found to continue the classical idiom of plasticity untouched, more or less, by the 'mediaeval' factor.

(ii) Eastern India

In Eastern India, Bengal and Bihar under Pāla and Sena rule (middle eighth century to end of twelfth century) constitute one important territory of artistic activity and Orissa another. The seventeenth century Tibetan historian Tāranāth has left us interesting information regarding history of art in Eastern India which has relevance to the time of the Pālas. He speaks of two artists of the time of Dharmapāla and Devapāla, named Dhimān and his son Bitpālo who hailed from Varendra (North Bengal). They are said to have produced many works in cast metal, as well as sculptures and paintings. The father and the son, Tāranāth continues, gave rise to two schools each in metal-casting, including sculptures, and painting. In respect of metal images the son is said to have initiated what Tāranāth calls the Eastern style and the father that of Madhyadeśa. In Painting the father was the

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founder of the Eastern school and the son of the Madhyadeśa school. The present author has shown elsewhere[2] that Tāranāth's division of art movement in Bengal and Bihar under the Pālas respectively into Eastern and Madhyadeśa schools is not warranted. From his account there emerges the fact, however, that during the time of Dharmapāla and Devapāla Dhīmān and Bitpālo, father and son, founded a school of art which was valid both in Bengal and Bihar; and the proper designation for it should be the Eastern school. Another interesting fact is that the founders were adepts in painting, in sculpting and in casting metal images, for which reason analogous expressions in these forms of religious art were not unlikely; rather, they were expected. Mediaeval sculpture in Orissa is, however, to be differentiated from this eastern stream.

The Eastern school is distinguished by an abundant output of sculptures hailing from both the parts of this art province. They were executed in finegrained black stone and in metal, occasionally also in wood (fig. 117) and ivory.[3] The bulk of the extant remains consists of cult images; besides there are the terracotta ornamentations on the brick temples that have survived in Bengal. Another important fact about the school is the existence of a fairly large number of dated sculptures from the time of Dharmapāla to that of the last of the Pāla rulers. Besides, there are sculptures dated with reference to the years of the reign of the rulers of the Chandra family of East Bengal, contemporaneous with the later Pālas, and of the Sena rulers who replaced the Pālas in Bengal.[4]

This wealth of dated material, practically from the beginning of the school till its end, end with a sequence of objects that can be chronologically placed, may allow certain valid observations regarding the course of the style. To a certain degree they may be applicable also in the study of the other regional styles, especially of the north, since all the styles move, more or less, along a uniform direction, irrespective of the gradual assertion of the local factors.

One tangible direction in the course of evolution, which the dated objects amply bear out, is the gradual elaboration of the image stela together with its plinth or *pīṭha*. The Eastern school derives the idea and form of the stele from Gupta classical sculpture and eventually develops it into a highly ornate composition serving as the throne-carriage of the divinity. The flat plinth of the earlier epoch comes to

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be indented by graduated projections, *tri-ratha, pañcha-ratha, sapta-ratha,* and so on, in the manner that one sees in the treatment of the walls of a *Nāgara* temple. In the plinth, which is sometimes in more than one tier, are placed the *vāhana* (mount) of the deity, the devotee or devotees, the emblem of the cult, etc. amidst meandering lotus scrolls. Over the plinth in the centre is the lotus seat on which the deity either stands or sits, with smaller lotus seats for the attendant divinities arranged on either side, the entire group being framed by the stele developed ultimately into a throne-back and *prabhāvali* fused together in one elaborate composition. This element, again, has an interesting evolution. A few early images, for instance the image of Sūrya from Bihar, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta,[5] dateable about seventh-eighth century, has the appearance of three separate stele, respectively for the principal divinity and the attendant ones, combined into one with a triple-lobed outline. This is reminiscent of a similar composition in a still earlier image of Sūrya from Deora (Bogra district, Bangla Desh),[6] now in the Rajshahi Museum. Such compositions may suggest that in the early phase of the emergence of the style in a definitive form the principal and the attendant divinities were carved in separate stelae and placed together side by side at the time of installation. In course of time these came to be fused together in one composition which gradually developed into the elaborate image stele, combining all the elements like the *pīṭha*, the throne, the *prabhā*, etc. into one highly ornate entity. Barring very rare exceptions, possibly necessitated by other exigencies, a gradual process of elaboration of the image stele, along the lines indicated above, follows the sequence of dated objects and may be found to be valid within a reasonable measure of definiteness. The scope of the present work will hardly allow us to discuss the details in this regard. Our study and assessment of Eastern Indian sculpture of the mediaeval phase will, however, be based upon the data supplied by the dated objects and supported in respect of the evolution of the image stele.

The mediaeval Eastern school, commonly known as the Pāla school, had its foundation on the Gupta classical norm as swayed by the autochthonous emotional trend of Eastern India *(ante.* pp. 155-159*)*. Already in the seventh century, i.e. long before the Pālas appeared in the political arena in this territory, the future character of the school in its definitive shape seems to have been foreshadowed. Early eighth

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century works, in their spreading, heavy and coarsened plastic texture, betoken, however, an almost total desiccation of Gupta classical heritage. This state appears to have continued in the second half of the century, as is evidenced in the treatment of the figures on the Bodhgaya stone dated in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Dharmapāla, the second Pāla ruler. A few fragmentary sculptures found from different sites in Eastern India, each with a similar plastic content, may be assigned to this phase.

Soon however the prevailing stupor seems to have been broken. This is illustrated by several sculptures, in stone as well as in metal, dated with reference to the different years of the reign of Devapāla, son and successor of Dharmapāla. These sculptures are,hence, to be assigned to the first half of the ninth century. They reflect a new awakening of artistic impulse together with a certain awareness of the Gupta classical heritage in its seventh century context in Eastern India. The restraint and discipline of the earlier epoch seem to have been recaptured. The body acquires again a softness and pliability and is contained within a rhythmical outline. The facial expression is distinguished by a calm serenity and the entire appearance is one of tenderness, if not of sensuousness. At the same time, a charming naturalism and simplicity, unencumbered by any superfluity of jewellery or ornamental accessories, characterise these works. With these developments ninth century sculpture in Eastern India is seen to have recovered the seventh century feeling for form together with its poise and plastic content. (cf. figs. 110-112). In these respects the mediaeval Eastern school may be described to have re-created the eastern version of the Gupta classical concept with a fresh vigour and outlook in an irrevocably changed environment.

Compared to eighth century works in Eastern India, those of the ninth century may be said to have registered great and significant advances. It is surprising how the extreme degeneration of the eighth century was forcibly arrested and the new awakening effected so quickly. In this regard the statement of Tāranāth concerning the achievements of the two Varendra artists, Dhīmān and Bitpālo, in the creation of the distinctive Eastern school appears to be highly relevant. Despite the absence of any tangible record, it is not unreasonable to presume that these two gifted artists, by their own genius and perseverance, were responsible for opening up the older channel by clearing

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the rut and setting the eastern movement on a new life of fruitful activity.

In the remarkable metal and stone sculptures of the period of Devapāla the Eastern school reaches a conscious entity and a definite identity in the first half of the ninth century. They may be said to have fixed the norm for the subsequent generations of artists. The plastic and emotional qualities evinced by these sculptures remain valid also in the second half. In the tenth century there may be noticed a preference for powerfully robust forms contained within rigid and, at the same time rhythmic contours (figs. 113-115). The figures are heightened in relief, the bodies are given increased flexions, and generally there is an elaboration of the ornamental details of the plinth and the stele. The forms are endowed with a conscious sense of strength and vigour, and despite a tendency to elaboration of details, tenth century Eastern Indian sculpture is distinguished by a certain kind of sober dignity expressed within a disciplined form.

The feeling for a plastic form, potent with a subdued vigour, comes to be slowly undermined however. In the eleventh century a slender body type of conscious grace and elegance seems to be invariably preferred. The modelling remains sure and perfect, and this together with the clarity of outlines, endows the sculpture of this phase with a kind of mannerism, more or less, schematic in character (fig. 116). The spontaneous elasticity of the earlier works appears to be getting thinner and already there are signs of stiffening and petrification of form due to increasing exuberance of ornamentation surrounding it.

In the succeeding century the above tendencies come to be emphasised in an inordinate degree. The sense of exuberance, already recognised seems to be highly exaggerated on the appearance of the Senas from the southern country in the political firmament of Eastern India. This is seen in the lavish display of sumptuous ornaments all over the surface leading to a maze of over-wrought detail amidst which the plastic form loses its identity and reaches almost a point of suffocation. There is no lack of technical skill and sufficiency since everything is seen to be chiselled with meticulous care and precision; but the school, as a whole, seems to have exhausted all its force and possibilities due to this overbearing tendency to emphasise detail in total disregard of plastic feeling. If there had been any possibility left for resuscitation,

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as a few sculptures of this century indicate (Pārvatī from Mandoil, Gaṅgā from Deopara, fragmentary temple sculptures from the same site—fig. 116—etc.), there was no time to arrest the prevailing stagnation. The rapid avalanche of Muslim aggression towards the close of the century put an end to all such possibilities.

The above observations relate, in a general way and approximately century by century, the formal course of the Eastern school during four hundred years of its existence. The school covers a wide territory and, apart from Bengal and Bihar where the school has its origin and development, reverberations of the school may be found in Mayurbhanj region of Orissa in the west and in Kamrup valley further east. A study of the findspots of the objects will indicate that important centres of activity were distributed over both the territories of this art province and several local dialects in respect of appearance and expression may be recognised; such expressions, however, do never cross the limits of the common denominator outlined above. Along with abundant productions in stone there is an equally remarkable series of metal sculptures hailing from different parts of Bengal and Bihar; wood (fig. 117) and ivory sculptures, though scanty, are also extant. An important fact is that a metallic precision characterises all works, irrespective of the medium, and the artistic level is, on the whole, fairly high. The school is also distinguished for its varied iconography, especially in respect of Tantrayāna Buddhism that had its stronghold in Eastern India. With Buddhism as the carrier the impact of the school is found to have been felt in the artistic activities of such distant regions as Nepal, Tibet and Kashmir and, beyond the seas, Burma, Siam and Indonesia. In these far-off regions the Eastern school, though retaining its dominant role, came to be swayed, in a greater or lesser degree, by local factors.

In Orissa the Eastern school with its derivation from the Gupta classical idiom is valid in a lesser degree however, and this validity is confined mostly to cult images. Around Lalitagiri, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri there was in the mediaeval phase an important centre of Tantric Buddhism and sculptures from these places, dating from the seventh century onwards, echo those of the Eastern school in respect of linear and formal content though lacking the delicacy and subtlety of the latter. The Mayurbhanj sculptures are nearer to the Eastern tradition; compact and sturdily built, they are characterised by an

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ample pliability and sinuous and sensitive modelling almost in the manner of the Eastern school. This closer relation of Mayurbhanj sculptures with those of Bengal and Bihar may have been due to geographical and cultural contiguity. The tenth century, as evidenced in Udayagiri and Ratnagiri sculptures, shows a preference for tighter modelling and comparatively heavier physiognomy. The forms are shorter and the treatment perhaps coarsened to a certain extent. Orissan cult images generally follow this tradition, and the tendency is reflected in sculptures of this category from Jajpur, Chauduar, Bhuvaneśvara, Puri, Konarak, Baudh, Mukhalingam and other places. The so-called 'mediaeval' concept may be found to have made intrusion in Orissan cult figures as the link with the Eastern school grows weaker with the passage of time and increase in geographical distance. Orissan cult images (fig. 119) in their broad expansiveness lack the disciplined rhythm of the Eastern school and are found to be less intense in artistic vision and experience.[7]

Orissa has supplied a remarkable series of sculptures as inseparable parts of the temple-body highly relevant to the decorative scheme of the facades and to ritualistic needs as well. Temple-building activity in Orissa, as the extant monuments testify, begins in the seventh century, if not earlier, and continues as an active movement for nearly seven hundred years. Along with the evolution of the temple design there may be noticed a corresponding elaboration of the sculptural decor of the facades. This decor consists of figure sculptures (human, animal and composite), as well as vegetal, floral and, to a lesser extent, of geometrical devices, each having its position specified in the temple scheme. Such sculptures have been characteristic also of other regions of temple-building activity where they occur, more or less, as applied decorations. In Orissa, however, these decorations appear as organic and integral parts of the architectural design and they seem to step out of the body and mass of the temple itself. It is not without reason that an eminent scholar observes that 'architecture in Orissa is but sculpture on a gigantic scale, and the modelled figure, as well as space itself, partake in its discipline.'[8]

Orissan temple sculpture occupies a conspicuous position in the history of mediaeval Indian art and can be studied best individually, temple by temple. This study, however, seems to be hardly within the scope of a general survey like the present work. It

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should be noted that this series of Orissan sculpture has supplied some of the most notable masterpieces that the genius of the Indian sculptor has ever produced. The decorative figure sculptures in Orissan temples seem to have followed again a norm that recalls the classical concept of the pre-Gupta phase with its spontaneous naturalism, dynamic vitality, careless abandon in gestures, actions and emotions and sensuous import in the truly physical sense. The spiritual import of the Gupta classical phase, which seem to have supplied the foundation of mediaeval Indian sculpture in general, appears to have hardly any impact on the temple sculptures of Orissa.

The plastic treatment of the wall surfaces starts in Orissa in the earliest extant temples, for instance, in those of the Śatrughṇeśvara group at Bhuvaneśvara. In the Paraśurāmeśvara at the same place the charming stone grilles (fig. 120) with dancing figures (one of them now possibly removed to the Kapileśvara temple)[9] add a new tone to the *jagamohana* walls. At Mukhalingam the *dohada* figures[10] within rich vegetation reveal the skill and mastery of the Orissan artists in blending figure seulptures to the sinuous tendrils of the creeper. The temple and its sculptural decor appears to be fused into a coherent mass, first perhaps in the Mukteśvara at Bhuvaneśvara. Each ornament, figural or otherwise, is found to be so skilfully adjusted to the scale and design of the whole that it is hardly possible to separate the one from the other. The structure and its decor thus form one complete entity. At the same time the figure sculpture gains in roundness and volume. With the curves and contours determined by the architectural lineaments, the figures seem to jut out of the wall surface and break up the solid mass by pleasing interplays of light and shade (fig. 121). This trend becomes further accentuated in the Brahmeśvara, the Rājarāṇi,[11] the Liṅgarāja,[12] etc. at Bhuvaneśvara where the figure sculptures appear to have emerged from far greater depths and darknesses. In the magnificent pile of the Sun temple at Konarak the sculptural decor, rich, varied and exuberant, reaches its supreme expression in the life size sculptures of lively execution and alluring beauty that adorn the different stages of the superstructure of the *jagamohana*. These sculptures in the round, with their superb modelling, the fulness of their forms (fig. 122) and their easy, graceful and, not infrequently, dynamic attitudes, add a sense of lightness to the stupendous mass of the superstructure.[13] The walls are also replete

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with sculptural ornamentation. This intricate treatment with figures and decoration of varied forms and manifestations seems to have created an inspired orgy of sculptural magnificence. Yet, everything is ordered and kept within the limits of structural propriety, with the result that there is nothing obtrusive or overbearing in the scheme of ornamentation. Here we have a perfect composition, so diversified and at the same time so marvellously unified. There is, perhaps, no other temple in India where the structure and its sculptural decor balance and complement each other in so organic and harmonious a manner. The animal sculptures in the round connected with the temple scheme are again superb portraits and rank among the masterly creations of Indian sculpture (fig. 123).

(iii) Gaṅgā-Yamunā Valley

The Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley (by which is meant in this context the plains of Northern India from the upper reaches of the two rivers to Vārāṇasī which is recognised to be the western limit of Eastern India by Rājaśekhara, a poet of this age) has yielded few sculptures of this phase, possibly on account of the depredations of the political turmoils from which the territory has suffered in the successive ages. The majority of the surviving sculptures are fragmentary and the architectural pieces, mostly damaged again, wrenched from their context. Compared to the productions of the Eastern school there is again an extreme paucity of dated material in the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley. Of the three known dated sculptures, two belong to the eleventh century and the third to the twelfth. Of the two eleventh century sculptures one is a Jaina *Sarvatobhadra* with four seated Jina figures on four sides of a square block. It is now preserved in the Lucknow Museum. Of the second, only the pedestal remains (Sarnath Museum). They afford hardly any clue as to the style of period. The twelfth century dated sculpture comes from Mehrauli, Delhi. It is an image of Vishṇu within a crowded and congested architectural setting. The extremely coagulated treatment of the main and the accessory figures represents practically the last phase of exhaustion and desiccation. No dated material is available prior to the eleventh century. In the study of the mediaeval sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley one misses, hence, the valuable help and data supplied by the dated sculptures of the Eastern school. It is to be noted that the paucity of

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dated sculptures in other regions of the north is a handicap also to the study of the respective regional styles of the mediaeval phase.

Nevertheless, there are enough evidences in the shape of better preserved specimens which, though undated, would indicate that the trend in the mediaeval sculpture of this area runs parallel to the contemporary Eastern movement and is allied to it. Like the Eastern school the mediaeval plastic style of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley has its foundation on the residual Gupta classical norm surviving in the seventh-eighth century. In this context may be mentioned a few sculptures from Kanauj including one of Viśvarūpa Vishṇu. The course of the style is also, more or less, analogous to that of Eastern India. The images are distinguished again by an almost identical physiognomical form and precise modelling of the features. The contours, however, are sharper and the plastic content stiffened to a certain extent,[14] possibly as a corollary to a hesitating intrusion of the so-called 'mediaeval' concept. In a manner the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley sculptures lack, again, the rhythm of the Eastern school. There are, however, exceptions to this prevailing trend. The so-called figure of Rukmiṇī from Nokhas[15] (Etah district, Uttar Pradesh) and the figure of an attendant divinity from Mathurā (Mathura Museum; fig. 124), each with its smooth and softened plasticity, offer pleasing contrasts to the general trend of the mediaeval sculpture of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā valley. The architectural sculptures are freer in movements and gestures, although in the later phase such sculptures become thinner in plastic content and stiffened, if not contorted, in movements. The architectural pieces from Jamsot[16] (Allahabad district, Uttar Pradesh), now in the Allahabad Museum, betray both these trends and apparently belong to two chronological phases, perhaps the tenth century and the twelfth, despite the attempt to place all of them in the same period.

(iv) Central India

Central India, the territory below the Gangetic plains to the Vindhyas, has been a great centre of artistic activities from rather early times. In the mediaeval period three royal dynasties, the Chandellas of Jejākabhukti, the Paramāras of Dhārā and the Haihayas of Tripurī, flourished in different regions of this territory, for a time ruling simultaneously with one another. The plastic traditions prevailing in the mediaeval phase and under the aegis of these

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dynasties, although differing in a certain measure in respect of form and expression, admit yet of a common denominator which may be designated as the mediaeval Central Indian trend. Lying midway between Eastern and Western India, each with a distinctive plastic style of its own, the Central Indian trend may be found to have shared in the characteristic features of both. The comparatively heavy physiognomical type and ample plastic volume seem to have been reminiscences of the earlier plastic trends in this part of the country. In the Gupta period the contemporary classical concept of poise and balance appears to have made certain impacts on the earlier plastic diction; but soon such ideals disintegrate and the heavy and broadened forms with a condensed plasticity, in which the disciplined rhythm and vision of the Gupta classical norm echo only in a faint manner, characterise the works of the territory in the subsequent phases. It seems that with the decline of the Gupta classical ideals the art of Central India had no other alternative but to hark back to the earlier heritage. The mediaeval Central Indian trend appears to have its foundation on this heritage with other contemporary styles of the contiguous territories reacting on it in varying degrees.

As already observed, mediaeval Central Indian sculpture in general is distinguished by heavier physiognomical form and ample, yet tight and compact, volume, in all probability derived from the earlier autochthonous heritage. But it lacks the plastic sensitivity of the latter. The treatment in these respects becomes increasingly desiccated and stereotyped with the result that in spite of a mechanical grace and a sense of perfection the figures, as a whole, fail to impress. There is hardly anything left again of the inner vision and experience that characterised the Gupta classical norm and lingered, almost to the last, in the mediaeval Eastern school. With an increasing stagnation in modelling the form, in spite of curves and volumes and a certain amount of definition, tends, to become, more or less, meaningless. These observations apply in general to the mediaeval Central Indian sculpture as a whole, more specifically to Chandella art, and are valid in respect of cult images as well as temple sculptures.

The Buddhist sculptures (tenth-eleventh century) from Mahoba[17] (Mahotsavanagara of old) illustrate this general trend in a more or less succinct manner. The figures are distinguished by a smooth and elegant charm, but this character resides more in technical perfection

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and graceful flexions than in any real aesthetic quality (fig. 125). Among the six images that of Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara[18] appears to be a production of a higher level, again in a technical sense. However much the sculptor Śrī Satāna describe himself to be an 'adept in the knowledge of all arts' *(sakala-śilpavidyā-kuśalaḥ)*, he does not seem to have been more than an accomplished craftsman. It is, at best, a petrified charm that he has been able to depict. The cult images from Khajuraho (fig. 126) also partake, more or less, of the same character, not infrequently with signs of the intrusion of the so-called 'mediaeval' factor represented by sharp outlines and abrupt angles, despite ample volumes and curves.

The mediaeval art of the Chandella regime is best illustrated in the temple sculptures of Khajuraho which also share the above characteristics in a general way. As in the Orissan temples, the wall surfaces are replete with figure sculptures (accessory divinities, erotic couples, surasundarīs, leogryphs and the like) and the number of such sculptures is far greater in a Khajuraho temple than in an Orissan. At Khajuraho there is a further elaboration of the temple scheme that admits of a far greater variegation of the temple body, both horizontally and vertically, thereby affording much greater space for the application of sculptures. Without going into details, it may be stated that the *jaṅghā* alone has three (sometimes two) tiers (fig. 127) of figure sculptures all around. The Kandarīya Mahādeva, the most finished of the Khajuraho temples, has singly about 900 figure sculptures, all nearly life-size in scale, round its body. It would not be wrong to say that the temples of Khajuraho teem with figure sculptures, so much so that they impart a sense of surfeit, if not overburdening.

The temple sculptures (fig. 128) are as fully modelled as the cult figures; but the volumes tend to be rigid and stiff. There is, no doubt, an impression of greater freedom and vitality; dynamic movements are suggested by extreme flexions of the body round its axis (fig. 129 & 130), turned and twisted at various angles almost to the point of absurdity. The contours are, not unoften, broken by sharp and pointed angles, possibly a contribution of the same so-called 'mediaeval' factor. It is because of these that whatever impression or suggestion of freedom, vitality or dynamic movement is there, it remains, not infrequently, unnatural and artificial. The temple sculptures of

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Khajuraho, or for the matter of those of other places in Central India, lack the bold naivete of Orissan sculptures of similar category and may be described as technical feats of the sculptor, concerned with showing the body at various angles.

The art of the Paramāra regime seems to have retained, in a greater measure, the classical value of form in linear as well as in plastic content. The figures are slim and slender with facile and unbroken contours. The modelling is sensitive and sensuous too. The face, however, wears a blank and vacuous expression. The image of Sarasvatī[12] (British Museum, London), once installed in King Bhoja's college in the capital city of Dhārā, reveals these characteristic features in a felicitous manner. The image of Naṭarāja Śiva from Ujjayini (Gwalior Museum) belongs also to the same category, although there may be recognised a certain coarsening and flatness in the treatment of the body (fig. 131). The figure of Vṛikshakā from Gyraspur (Gwalior Museum) has a comparatively heavy physiognomical form; but it seems to be unencumbered by the weight of full and rounded volumes (fig. 132). In the triple-flexioned body the bends naturally merge with one another, and despite an axial torsion there is nothing unnatural or artificial about it. The sculptors of the Paramāra area appear to have followed an ideal that is nearer to the Gupta classical norm in the plastic sense only; they seem to be unaware, however, of its spiritual import.

The mediaeval art of the Haihaya area (Chedi region in the Narmadā basin) starts with a greater awareness of the Gupta classical ideal as may be noticed in the panels of the river goddesses Gaṅgā (fig. 133) and Yamunā, now in the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck collection, New York, U.S.A. They appear to belong to the ninth century. The figures are distinguished by ample and rounded volumes in the manner of the common denominator of the mediaeval Central Indian trend. The contours, however, are facile and unbroken in accordance with the Gupta classical ideal. The treatment of the body has, again, the flavour of the same concept, though not in its spiritual import. Soon however there may be recognised a certain amount of stiffness and rigidity in the treatment of the body (cf. images of dancing Vaishṇavī and Mahīshamardinī in the same collection) and subsequently a broad expansiveness (cf. the Yoginī images at Bheraghat; fig. 134) distinguished further by harsh contours which ultimately

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become emphasised (fig. 135) as the so-called 'mediaeval' factor gains ground.

(v) Western India

The westernmost province of mediaeval Indian sculpture comprises Rajasthan, Gujarat and Kathiawar. It is in this territory that the impact of the so-called 'mediaeval' factor is more explicitly felt, particularly from the tenth century onward. Rajasthan, however, stands slightly apart. In this area there may be recognised a variety of expressions ranging from a persistence of the classical values of form along with a susceptibility to a pressure of the 'mediaeval' concept leading ultimately to a complete assertion of the latter. Otherwise, the plastic movements in these three areas are linked together formally as well as psychologically.

In Rajasthan, in the earlier phase, the classical tradition seems to have a stronger hold, as is evident in the sculptures from Osian (ninth century) and Vasantgarh (tenth century). The former group is characterised by bold and ample rendering of the youthful form within rhythmic contours,[20] the plastic content being reminiscent of the classical trend as lingering in this area in the seventh-eighth century. The Vasantgarh sculptures[21] are also distinguished by a largeness of treatment and sensitive modelling, while the decorative designs seem also to have been derived from the classical repertoire. Sculptures from Harshagiri, particularly the friezes of dance and music from the Purana Mahadeo temple (fig. 136), apart from the treatment of the plastic forms in the classical manner, are imbued with a sense of lively actions, movements and gestures. But this awareness of the classical ideal gradually grows thinner with the passage of time. Chandravatī sculptures,[22] in spite of their heavy roundness and ponderous mass, have hardly any linear flexibility and seem to have been stolidly conceived. At the same time the modelling appears to have become harder indicating a stagnation of the classical value and intrusion of the 'mediaeval' element of hardened and stiffened lines with sharp edges. These observations apply also to marble reliefs of Vimala Shah's temple at Dilwara (Mount Abu) of the first half of the eleventh century (fig. 137). The contemporary cult image, for instance, the figure of Vidyā Devī from Palta (Bikaner) shares these characteristics.[23] Despite the ample and rounded volumes, the

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hardened modelling with not too facile contours represents rather an unhappy combination of two opposing ideals. The inevitable is soon to follow and that means a complete acceptance of the 'mediaeval' ideal with all that it signifies. The twelfth century introduces a conscious elegance; the figures are of lighter build, but contained within harsher outlines, not infrequently consisting of sharper angles and concave curves, apparently a contribution of the 'mediaeval' factor. In the thirteenth century the plastic context is further thinned down and there is recognised an added emphasis on sharp and pointed angularity of the linear contours and almost sickle-like concavity of the curves. At the same time there is an inordinate elaboration of the ornamental details which, flawlessly executed though, appear to suffocate the form that has already grown much too arid to evoke any plastic feeling. The sculptures of the Luna Vasahi (Tejahpāla's temple, Dilwara), dated AD 1231, illustrate the above characteristics in the most telling manner (fig. 139). Even after the establishment of Islam as the dominant political power in Northern India Hindu rule continues in Rajasthan and naturally also architectural and sculptural practices. In the centuries following the 'mediaeval' features are further accentuated and Rajasthani sculpture loses irrevocably all intrinsic value.

In Gujarat and Kathiawar the 'mediaeval' features are more conspicuous and seem to appear earlier than in Rajasthan. In this context it has to be noted that Gujarat in the mediaeval phase has developed a style of manuscript painting with fairly abundant productions in which the 'mediaeval' features are prominently in evidence. The earliest extant documents go back to the eleventh-twelfth century. Already in these the style is seen to be fairly stereotyped indicating that it has been in operation for a fairly long time in the anterior epochs. The distinctive features of the style consist of brittle and crisp lines, sharp and angular, outlining a flatly modelled form in colour. It is further interesting to note that the modelling in colour is done first and next are drawn the outlines to contain the form. Naturally and logically there is a tendency in this process for the lines to break in accordance with the contours of the modelled masses. In Gujarat and Kathiawar the same predilection for broken lines, with hardly any impression of flow or flux, seems to characterise also the art of sculpture of the mediaeval phase and may have been a

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parallel development. Together, there is also some amount of hardened modelling. What has been said about the 'mediaeval' element in Rajasthani sculpture is valid, in a far greater measure, for Gujarat and Kathiawar. In Rajasthan, the lines, in spite of their sharpness and brittle quality, retain, at least up to the thirteenth century, an appearance of uninterrupted flux, while the volumes, though hardened, have a semblance of roundness and sensitivity, particularly when seen apart from the overburdening ornamental context. In Gujarat and Kathiawar there is a complete negation of these qualities that have been the remnants of the earlier classical concept. The sharp edges lead to a straitened modelling and the content itself becomes dry and desiccated. The temple sculptures may exhibit a certain amount of relaxation and freedom of movement (fig. 138). But whatever movement is there it tends to be nervous and jerky and, not often, overdone.

(vi) Punjab, Western Himalayas and Kashmir

Extant examples of mediaeval sculpture in the Punjab and the Western Himalayan tracts seem to register two traditions, in a manner existing simultaneously and side by side. The impact of the Gupta classical tradition has been recognised in the wooden reliefs from Brahmor (Chamba) of the preceding epoch (*ante.* p. 161) and a group of sculptures from Chamba and Kangra valleys of ninth century date is likewise characterised by a softer, though not subtler, plasticity and suave linear content, inherited evidently from the same classical ideal. In the following century and somewhat later also classical value in respect of linear and plastic content seems to linger, though the modelling tends to become coarsened to a certain extent. At the same time there is a preference for a heavier physiognomical form. In some instances the treatment of the drapery is reminiscent of the Gandhāra tradition, a survival of a still earlier idiom prevailing in this area. Sculptures from the Punjab also seem to follow the same trend. Mention should be made in this context of a collection of stone sculptures in a religious establishment at Rohtak which clearly betrays significant indebtedness to the Gupta classical ideal in linear as well as plastic themes. The manner in which the ideal of the Gupta classical tradition persists in the former Himalayan hill states and the Punjab is highly interesting and speaks eloquently of the strong impact

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of that ideal in these areas.

At the same time from the eighth century onward there appear in Chamba some inscribed metal sculptures which record the impact of the specific 'mediaeval' concept in their mechanical treatment with sharp and incisive outlines and petrified plastic content, often flattened and elongated in texture. The fountain stones from Chamba[24] and some other hill states show again patterns – geometrical, floral and vegetal, as well as figure sculptures—skilfully woven within panels of square, rectangular and diamond shapes. All are sharply cut with the relief extremely flattened out, so much so that they look like sketches made by incisive lines. In these one may recognise also the impact of the so-called 'mediaeval' concept perhaps in its pristine aspect.

In the mediaeval sculpture of Kashmir various traditions may be seen to have been at work. Inspiration from Gandhāra, noticeable in works of the earlier epoch, seems to have exhausted its possibilities by the eighth century. At this period a new inspiration appears to have penetrated into the valley from the East. Kalhaṇa records the story of an image from Bengal being carried to Kashmir by Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa and the fairly large number of Kashmir sculptures, especially those in metal, may lend a credibility to this story. In their form and treatment and in physiognomy as well, they bear unmistakable impress of the Eastern school. Some of them appear to be, more or less, authentic renderings, perhaps by local artists, of typical East Indian works in stone or metal. For instance, one may refer to the metal image of Padmapāṇi with his two śaktis bearing a dedicatory inscription of the reign of queen Diddā (AD 980-1003).[25] The similarity with an East Indian work is so strong that, but for the inscription, doubts may have been raised regarding its place of origin. Some may even hold the view that it might have been imported in the valley from a reputed art centre in Eastern India. Normally however, the Eastern school appears to have been interpreted in Kashmir in a rather stolid and cruder manner (fig. 140 & 141). The indebtedness to the Eastern idiom is confined generally to Buddhist sculptures. The Brahmanical sculptures follow trends allied and akin to those of the Punjab hill states and of Western India. Whatever the trend, the Gandhāra tradition of drapery seems to remain valid in Kashmir throughout. One other fact has to be noted with regard to

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mediaeval sculpture of Kashmir. Despite a number of trends operating in the valley, no attempt seems to have been made to develop a local style by fusing and harmonising the different influences. Each trend occurs, more or less, as an isolated factor in the art history of Kashmir.

(vii) Deccan

In the Deccan there is a vigorous artistic activity in connection with the architectural movement under the aegis of the different dynasties of kings holding political power in this territory. But the brilliant days of plastic tradition seems to have been over after the eighth century. The architectural activity continues throughout the mediaeval phase in certain vigour and strength, but in sculpture all creative inspiration seems to have been largely dimmed. It continues, as in many other territories also during the period, in a mechanical way with no spark of life, so to say. The output, no doubt, is abundant, but by no means can it be described to be aesthetically significant. The stupor that has overtaken the sculptural art in the Deccan during the mediaeval phase seems to be highly intriguing in view of the momentous activity in this form of art for nearly three centuries immediately preceding the mediaeval phase (*ante.* pp. 161-168).

In the prevailing stalemate the Jaina colossus at Sravana Belgola (fig. 142) appears to have supplied a happy interlude. The very largeness of the conception is striking and the manner of its execution felicitous in the extreme. In the treatment of the torso there may be recognised a smoothness and suavity, though the shoulders exhibit a certain stiffness and constraint. The squarish face (fig. 143) has upturned mouth, sensitively modelled lips, full chin and nostrils with deep shadows accentuating the modelling. The petal-shaped eyes with curving eye brows give an idea of wide outlook and endow the face with a sense of deep perception as well as sympathy and compassion. Considered as a whole, the colossus at Sravana Belgola betokens an ideal which is not far removed from that in the art of the preceding epoch.

Throughout the Deccan mediaeval sculpture is found to be, more or less, of a uniformly mechanical character. This is true of all areas of the territory, the north, the south and the east corresponding to three well-marked linguistic zones, the Marathi, the Kannaḍa and

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the Telugu. The art in the respective areas differs only in the degree of accent on the prevailing trend. Of the sculpture of the three areas that of the Kannaḍa (Karṇāṭaka) zone is conspicuous and more well known because of the abundant productions, as well as of the extremely florid style that it ultimately develops. The art flourished under the patronage of the Western Chālukya rulers of Kalyāṇa and the Hoyśalas of Dorasamudra, the latter regime following the direction supplied by the former. In the Chālukyan regime the themes and compositions, that had been of supreme artistic significance in the earlier epoch, are, in many instances, found to have been repeated, but without the breadth and largeness of conception and the creative sense that distinguished the earlier works. Within the architectural setting that a theme is placed, it loses, in a large measure, the inner 'elan' as well as the spontaneous and dynamic character of the previous representations. Moreover, the frame that usually surrounds the principal composition in the Chālukyan phase is seen to be overburdened with elaborate ornamentation that has an overwhelming effect on the main theme itself.[26] One may admire the meticulous skill and efficiency with which the rich and intricate ornamentation has been worked out. But this ornamentation does not compensate for the hardening of the plastic form, already stiff and lacking in sureness. Rather, the overcrowding ornamentation has a choking, if not deadening, effect on the plastic content altogether. This is true both of cult images as well as of temple sculptures. This florid style of Deccanese sculpture seems to have reached its most exaggerated expression in the Hoyśala regime. The output is decidedly large. The temple body appears to be saturated with figure sculptures in endless ornamental setting of the most bewildering variety (fig. 144). The reliefs are bold with smooth and rounded plastic masses finely carved. Sometimes, the sculptures are completely in the round (figs. 145 & 146); yet they appear to be pressed between two surfaces of the relief. The form further is drowned and lost in the exuberant maze of decorative details, despite the fact that, not unoften, they are deeply undercut with a fine sense of draughtsmanship and chiaroscuro effects. These characteristics are valid both for images (figs. 147 & 148) meant to be enshrined as well as for sculptures meant for the temple body. Technical skill apart, there is hardly anything to commend in a style of this extremely florid kind. As Kramrisch[27] observes, "the relics of Indian

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plasticity are seized by torpor and the exasperation of intricate artifices."

(viii) South India

In the south, especially in the Tamil land, there are however momentous productions that carry on the classical norm, as interpreted in the Pallava idiom (*ante.* pp. 168-173), with a tougher vitality and sounder conviction. At a time when the classical heritage is, almost universally, wearing out, South India not only continues it but leads it into fresh channels of fruitful expression. The plastic sense, inherent in the classical ideal, remains high till a comparatively late period, at least up to the fall of the Vijayanagara kingdom, and possibly even further.

A vigorous modelling, together with a facile contour, evidently a heritage of the Pallava idiom, characterises the sculptures of the rock-cut temple at Kalugumalai of about the ninth century (figs. 149 & 150). The slender physiognomical form, along with the plastic import, seems also to be derived from Pallava tradition. In the tenth century is preferred a sturdier physiognomy (fig. 151), yet the sense of modelling remains unaffected. Early Chola sculptures of the tenth and eleventh centuries follow this direction. In the hands of the Chola artists the classical value acquires a new interpretation which adds further to its potentialities. It is interesting to observe, again, that the canons of art, systematised about this period, seem to have a distinctive influence in steadying, if not arresting, the forces of disintegration of the classical value that have been appearing, in a greater or lesser degree, in contemporary art of the other territories. The plastic texture in early Chola sculpture is distinguished by a vigorous form, rendered most felicitously and endowed with a tough vitality, as well as by an easy and animated flexibility in which the masses are seen to coalesce, one into the other, in the most suave and coherent manner. At the same time the slender and supple form of the earlier epoch is seen to have been recaptured. A dignified bearing, apparently borne out of a self-imposed discipline, seems to endow the form with a vital current that seeks to illumine the poses and attitudes intended to be represented. There seems to be nothing that can be said to be meaningless or artificial in this art. The dress and the jewellery are seen to be in a sort of organic relationship with the body and they add to the

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suppleness of the form. The following observations of Kramrisch[28] appear to be highly relevant in this context. "The manifold but sparingly used chains and clasps, the ribbons and the flowing pieces of cloth, appear as further possibilities of the body itself. They follow, accentuate and caress the surging tenderness of a smooth and rarified flesh. The tendency of Indian sculpture, from the early classical age onward and also prior to it, to negate what is not body by making it of the body, has now been brought to subtlest completeness."

South Indian sculpture of the later Chola phase retains fully the suppleness and slenderness of form, as well as disciplined curves. But there may be noticed a slight hardening of treatment together with a greater accentuation in the rendering of the joints, especially of the knees. While this may possibly be symptomatic of the eventual ossification of the style, there seems to be hardly any sign whatsoever of the exhaustion of the tradition till a rather late phase. The specific Chola idiom sets the norm of subsequent South Indian sculpture and up till the end of the Vijayanagara epoch the idiom continues to maintain a high quality, though the abundant output, together with endless repetitions of the same themes and motifs, in spite of the fact that the themes are varied and manifold and treated with boldness and felicity, may lend an impression of tiresome surfeit, if not of stereotypisation.

There have been abundant productions, in stone as well as in metal, throughout the long period that this art remains active and vital. The best stone sculptures may be seen on the walls of the temples, on gopurams, on immense halls, especially on their pillars, and other buildings, all forming integral parts of the vast temple complexes. The Koraṅganātha temple at Srinivasanallur, the two Bṛihadīśvara temples at Thanjavur (figs. 152-153) and Gangaikondacholapuram, the Airāvateśvara temple at Darasuram, the temples at Kumbakonam, (fig. 151), the gopurams at Chidambaram (fig. 154), the Jambukeśvara temple near Tiruchirapalli, the Varadarāja at Kāñchīpuram, the Mīnākshī at Madurai, the Śrīraṅgam temple, the Suchindram temple, the vast corridors of the Rāmeśvaram temple, etc. are a few among the many eminent and impressive architectural conceptions where South Indian stone sculpture may be seen in its most characteristic expressions. Within architectural frame figures appear in bold and graded relief, in panels after panels, all bearing in their disciplined

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and dignified forms, firmly planted on the ground, an idea of immense strength and vigour, as well as of calm composure and detachment. Earthy though, the quality is that of an "evanescent earthiness of lasting dignity."[29] The bodies are treated with a supple roundness, almost with a touch of tenderness. With the passage of time an increasing use is made of figure sculptures in the treatment of the walls, the pillars, etc. and in this architectonic context South Indian sculpture is seen to maintain its integrity till near the very end.

South Indian sculpture of this period is more well known because of abundant and highly conspicuous productions in metal. They are meant for various uses, apart from that of installation in the shrines. The rituals of the respective creeds provide for a fair number of colourful ceremonies spread throughout the year; and in such ceremonies the myths and legends associated with the particular god, along with his various aspects and manifestations, are usually on display with the help of the renderings of the themes in metal. Metal images are also intended for ceremonial and religious processions. There are other uses of metal sculptures again connected with the various parapharnelia of the complicated process of worship. This situation may explain the development in South India of a remarkable style of metal sculpture that remains active and vital for nearly a millennium. The tradition still survives in the south, localised in a few centres.

In South India metal images are mostly cast in copper or in an alloy of five metals *(pañchaloha)* with copper in the largest proportion, at least in the early phases. Brass is also seen to have been used, though rarely; the use of brass becomes commoner in the later phases however. The technique followed is what is known as *cire perdue* or 'lost-wax' process which is known to have been described in certain detail in our *Śilpa* texts[30] as *madhūchchhishṭa-vidhāna*. Both solid and hollow castings appear to have been practised; the former process, however, seems to have been largely in use.

Ritualistic and functional needs apart, an intense spiritual and emotional movement, arising out of a kind of *bhaktī* (theistic devotion) that seems to have got hold of the people of the south, may be found to have been at the root of a great urge for creative visions and experience, and these appear to have been most successfully reflected in the metal sculptures of South India. Completely in the round and

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thoroughly plastic in conception, they register a high degree of achievement, aesthetically as well as spiritually. In not a few instances the artist seems to have been informed by a religious fervour and emotion which appear to have been successfully rendered in the sculptures that betoken not only a technical sufficiency but also an identity between the artist and his image. In the completely rounded modelling, the front, the back and the sides receive full and equal share of attention. The pure and smooth texture of the body, with graceful flexions and easy flexibility of the plastic masses, endows the figure with naturalism and poise, with sedateness and sublimity (figs. 155-161). The classical ideal of the Gupta age appears to have been recreated in these South Indian metal sculptures. Through the centuries these qualities are maintained at a high level, and it is only towards the end of the active phase that there may be recognised certain signs of the hardening of the plastic content.

The main types represented in the remarkable series of South Indian metal sculptures are the various forms and manifestations of the gods and the goddesses, particularly of Śiva, Vishṇu and Devī, besides portraits of the Śaiva saints and the Vaishnava Alvars and those of the donors also in some instances. A small proportion consists of Buddhist and Jaina images as well. Irrespective of the religious affiliation, the style is uniform. The most widely known theme is, no doubt, that of the grand conception of Naṭarāja or Śiva in his cosmic dance of 'creation-destruction' (fig. 161). As a type it appears comparatively late in the series of South Indian metal images. Nevertheless, in it the vision of the South Indian artist is seen to have bequeathed a highly significant motif that is, perhaps, without a parallel in the entire range of world art. In the perfect realisation of the profound symbology underlying the conception, along with the balance, rhythm and poise inherent in it, it ranks as one of the supreme creations of Indian art.

(ix) Summing up

In the above survey of the regional styles in mediaeval Indian sculpture it has become clear, it is believed, that the styles, barring exceptional instances, move along a uniform direction, so to say, with the impress of the local features in a greater or lesser degree. The latter are noticed in dress, jewellery and, to a certain extent, in

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physiognomy as well. Again, the limits between one art zone and another are not clearly defined. Overlappings of the trends in the contiguous territories are not infrequent.

Except in the south, all creative impulses appear to have largely dimmed in the whole of India by the thirteenth century. In territories where conditions are favourable sculptural art continues in a mechanical manner with the products growing increasingly desiccated and devoid of any plastic content. This ossification leads ultimately to the exhaustion of the art and of all purposeful traditions.

NOTES

[1] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 97.

[2] S. K. Saraswati, 'East Indian Manuscript Painting' *(Chhavi*, pp. 256-57).

[3] Stella Kramrisch, 'Pala and Sena Sculpture' *(Rūpam*, No. 40); R.C. Majumdar ed., *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, pp. 532-47.

[4] The list of dated sculptures is too long to be enumerated here. For an up to date list reference may be made to R. C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, 1971, pp. xxx-xxxvi.

Dated sculptures are more abundant in Bihar where they are available, sometimes more than one for every quarter of a century, for the long period of four hundred years of the duration of the school. In Bengal the dated sculptures, though rare in the early half of the period, are more numerous from the close of the tenth century and continue till the end of the twelfth. Comparable dated material from Bihar and Bengal leave hardly any doubt regarding the identity of the style followed in the two regions. A solitary sculpture from Bangla Desh (now in Rajshahi Museum), dated with reference to a year in the sixteenth century, may indicate that the style lingered in a hopelessly degenerated state for nearly four hundred years after the collapse of the school about the close of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth.

The dated sculptures, as the author has shown elsewhere ('East Indian Manuscript Painting,' *Chhavi*, pp. 247-50), supply only an approximate chronology, but the margin of error between the approximate and the absolute is not likely to be more than five to ten years.

[5] *Rūpam*, No. 40, fig. 4.

[6] S. K. Saraswati, *Early Sculpture of Bengal*, second ed., fig. 9.

[7] Heinrich Zimmer, *Art of Indian Asia*, pls. 372-73.

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[8] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 114.

[9] S. K. Saraswati, *Survey of Indian Sculpture*, first ed., fig. 162.

[10] *Ibid.*, fig. 161.

[11] R. C. Majumdar ed., *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. V, *The Struggle for Empire*, fig. 103.

[12] *Ibid.*, fig. 106.

[13] S. K. Saraswati, *Survey*, 1st ed., figs. 164, 165.

[14] *Ibid.*, figs. 167, 173.

[15] *Ibid.*, fig. 170.

[16] Pramod Chandra, *Sculptures in the Allahabad Museum*, pls. CVI, CVIII-CXVIII.

[17] K. N. Dikshit, 'Six Sculptures from Mahoba' (*MASI.*, No. 8).

[18] R. C. Majumdar ed., *History*, V, *Struggle*, fig. 119.

[19] *Ibid.*, fig. 117.

[20] Stella Kramrisch, *Art of India through the Ages*, pl. 116.

[21] R. C. Majumdar ed., *History*, V, *Struggle*, p. 660.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 660-61.

[23] S. K. Saraswati, *Survey*, 1st ed., fig. 176.

[24] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 117, fig. 106.

[25] R. C. Majumdar ed., *History*, V, *Struggle*, p. 666; A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 142.

[26] Stella Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, fig. 106.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[30] Cf. *Abhilashitārtha Chintāmaṇi* or *Mānasollāsa, prakaraṇa*, I. 77-97; *Śilparatna* of Śrikumāra, part II (T.S.S. XCVIII), chap. II.

The *Mānasāra* has also a similar section; the text, however, is extremely corrupt. One of the author's pupils, a Reader in Sculpture in Banaras Hindu University, has recently produced a valuable dissertation on our ancient and traditional methods of metal casting.

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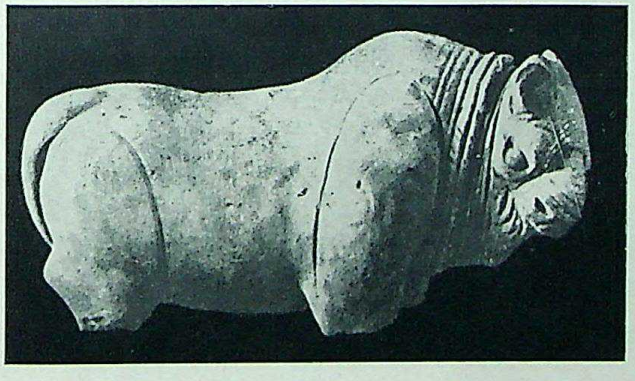

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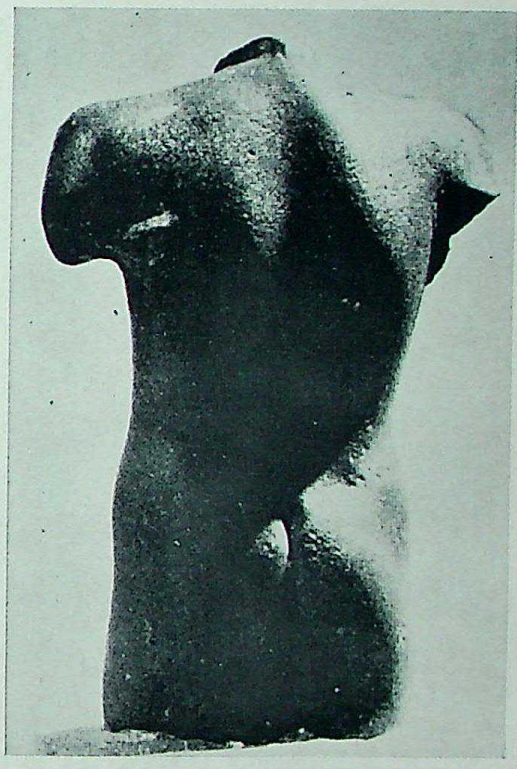

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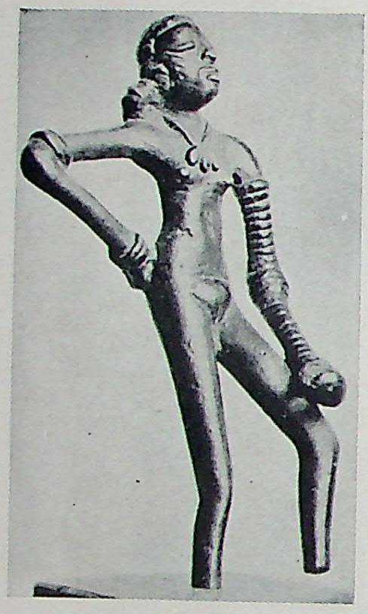

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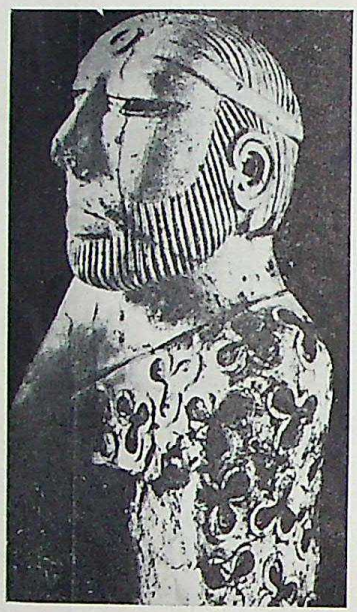

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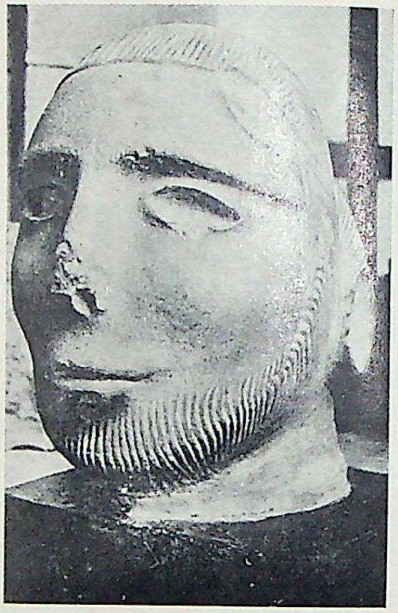

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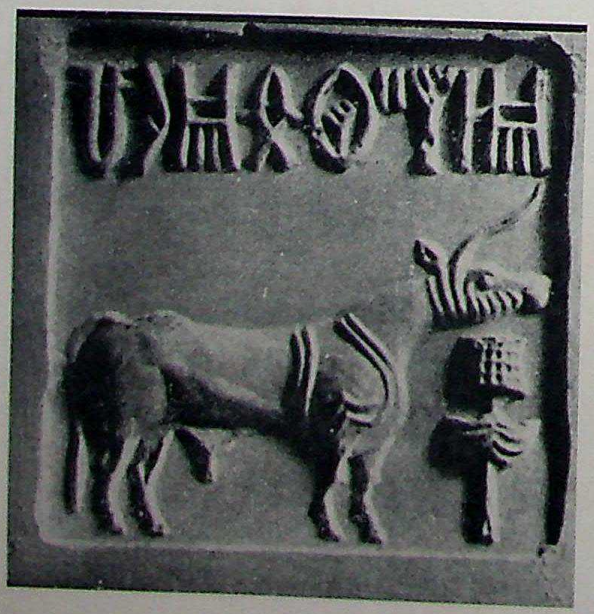

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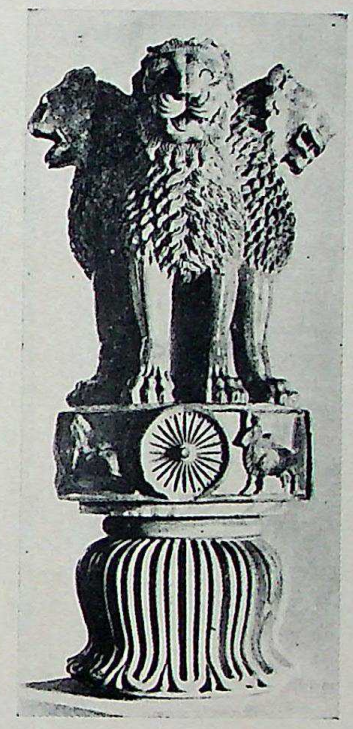

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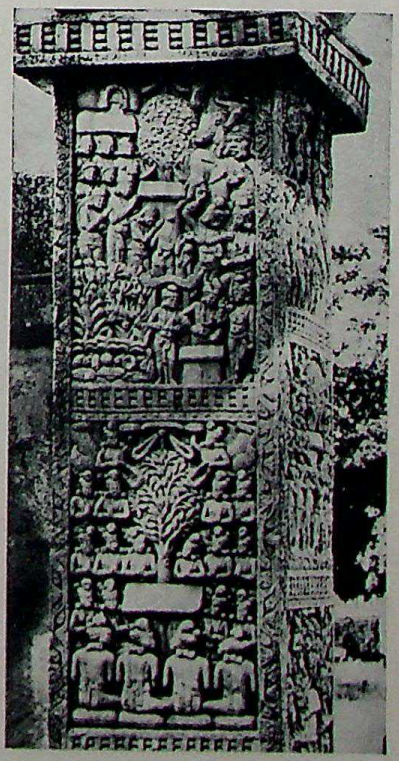

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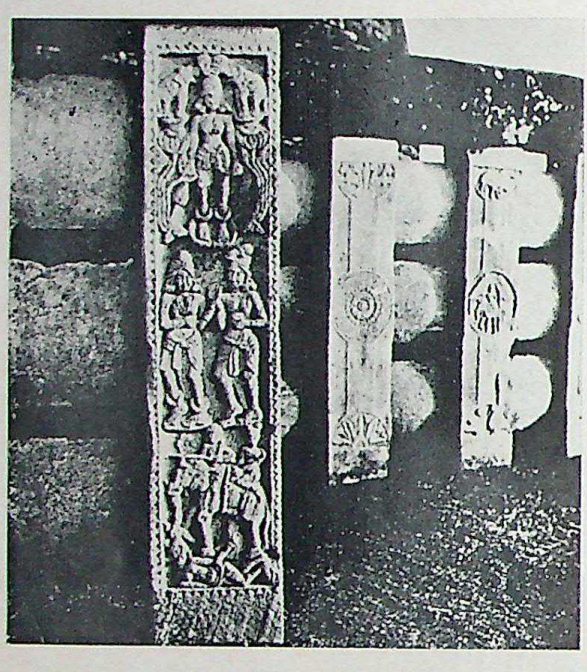

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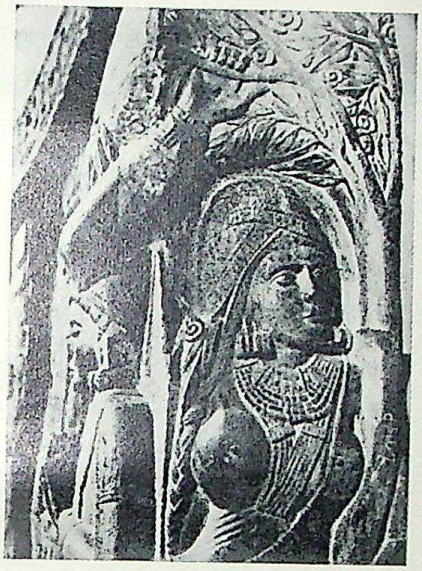

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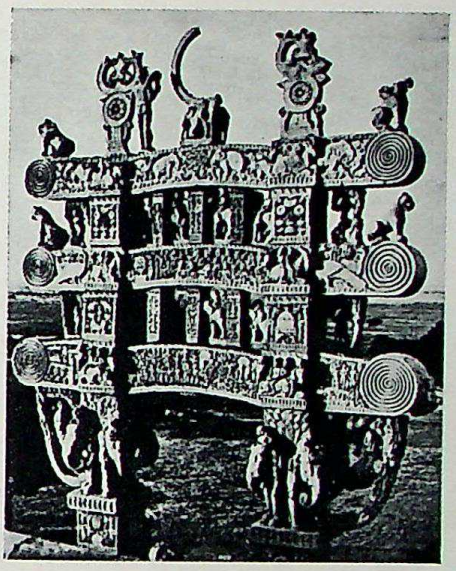

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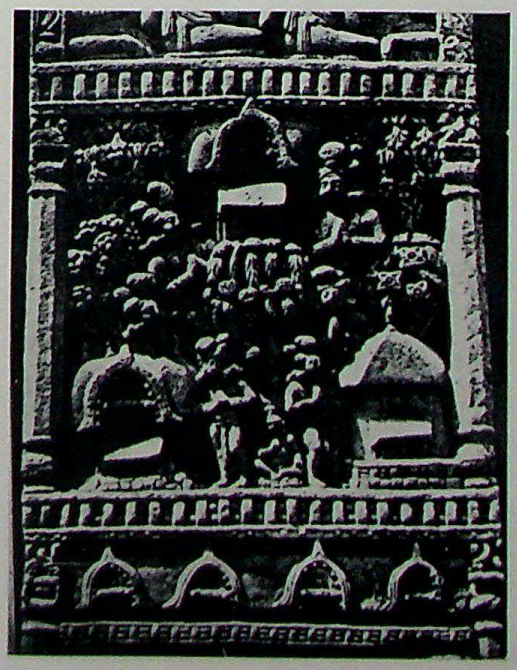

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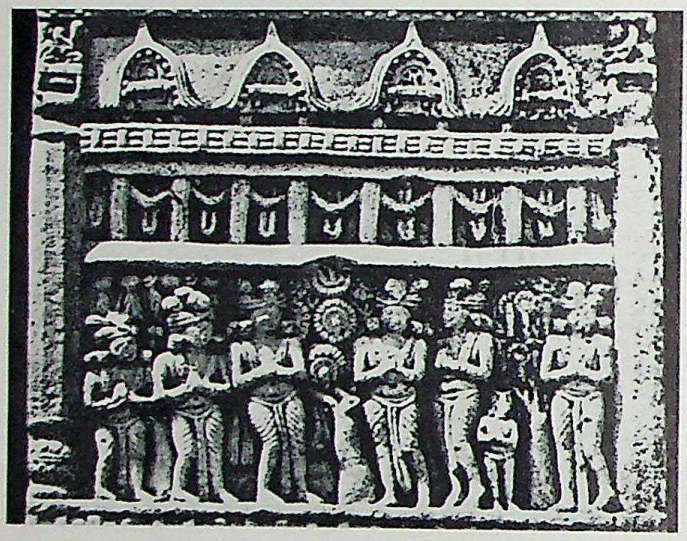

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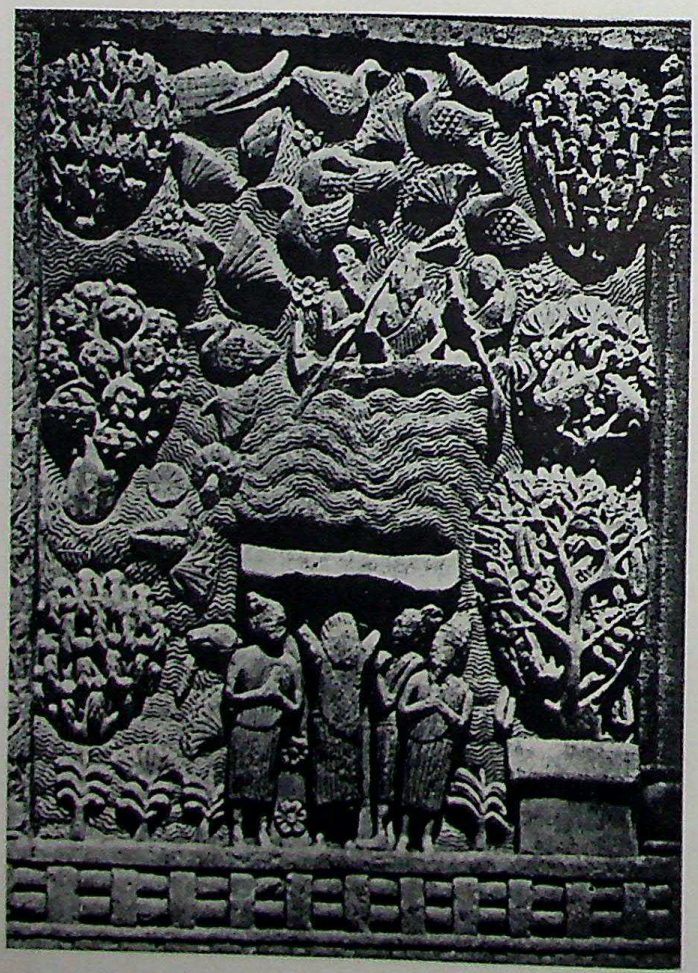

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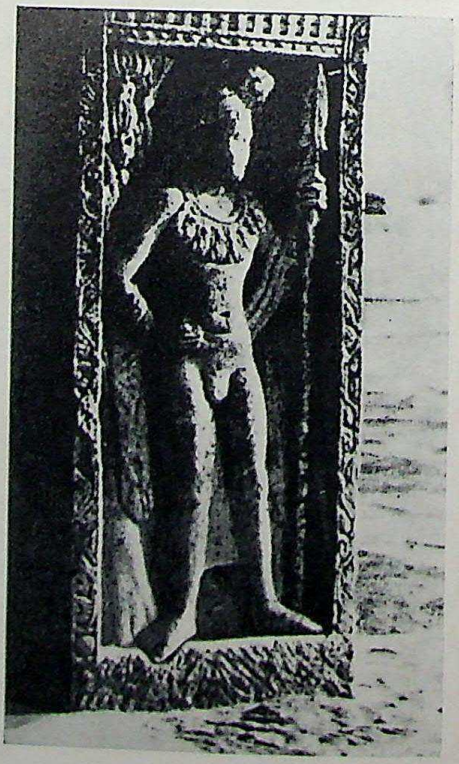

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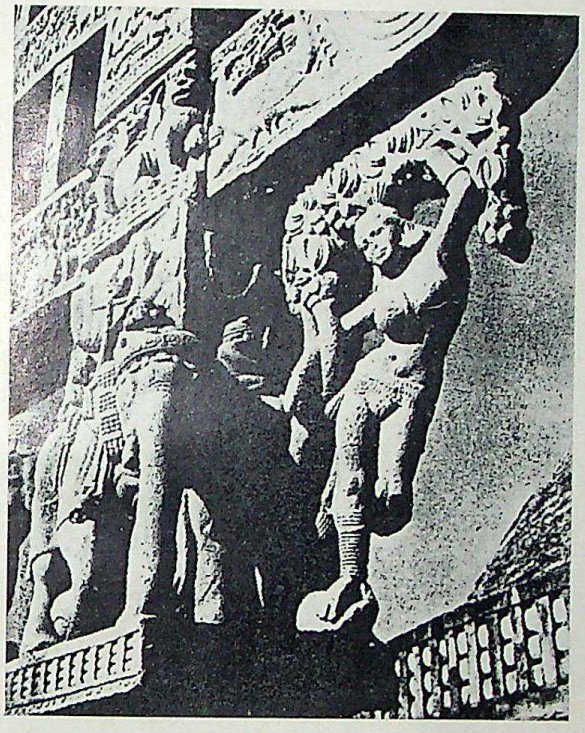

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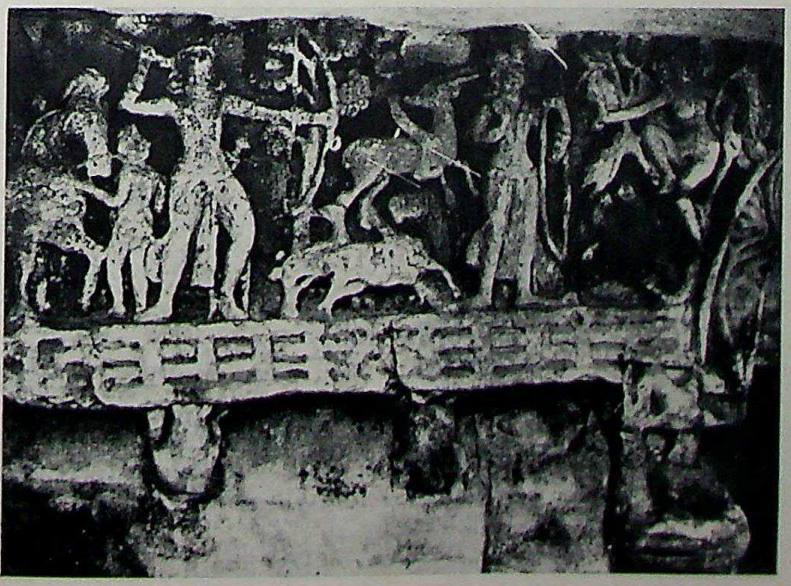

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Fig. 30. Patna, *Yaksha.* Stone. Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Fig. 31. Didarganj, *Yakshiṇi.* Stone. Patna Museum.

Fig. 32. Sarnath, Bodhisattva of Friar Bala. Stone. Sarnath Museum.

Fig. 33. Mathura, Maitreya. Stone. Mathura Museum.

Fig. 34. Sanchi, Balarāma. Stone. Sanchi Museum.

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Fig. 35. Ahichchhatra, Buddha. Stone. National Museum, New Delhi.

Fig. 36. Mathura, Kanishka. Stone. Mathura Museum.

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Fig. 39. Fyzabad, *Prasādhikā*. Stone. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

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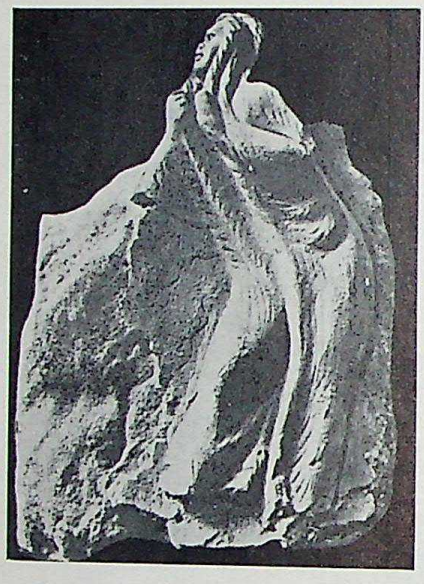

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Fig. 40. Gandhāra, Bodhisattva. Stone. National Museum, New Delhi.

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Fig. 43. Karle, Donor Couple. Rock-cut.

Fig. 44. Karle, Dancing Couple. Rock-cut.

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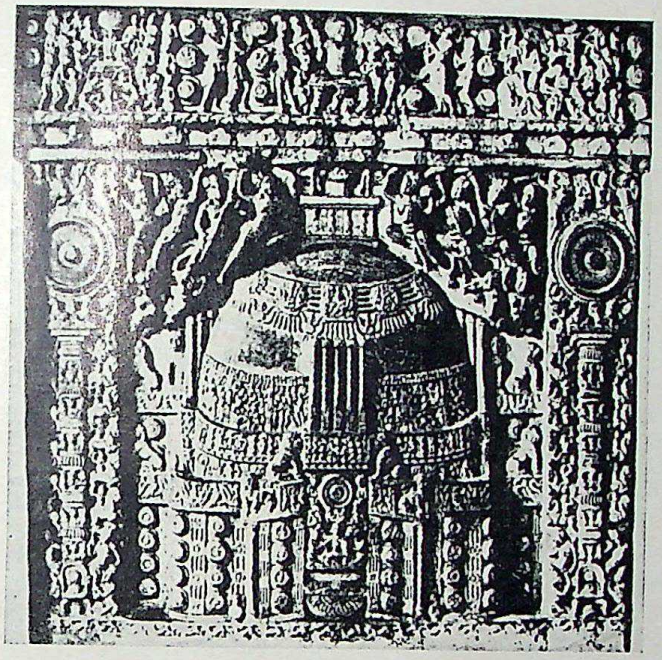

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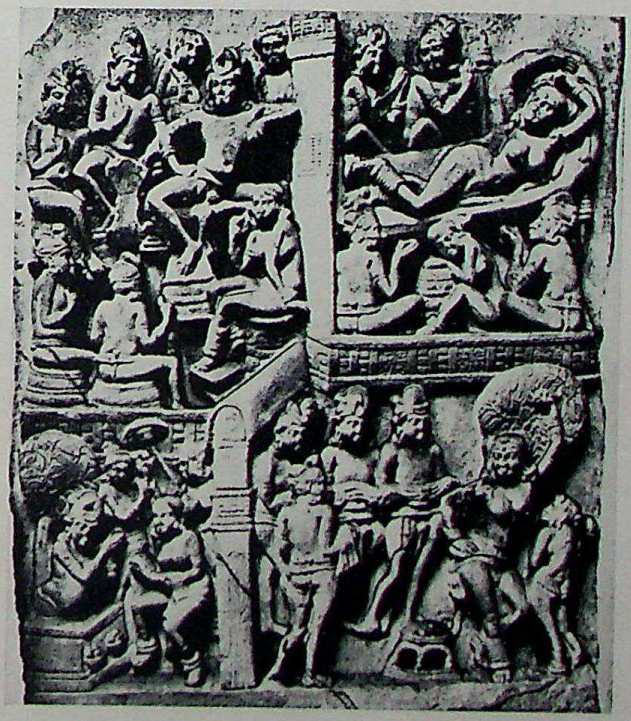

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Fig. 45. Amarāvatī, Relief carving showing replica of a stūpa. Stone. Government Museum, Madras. *Fig. 46.* Amarāvatī, Relief carving showing *pūrṇa-kumbha*. Stone. Government Museum. Madras. *Fig. 47.* Amarāvatī, Rail carving. Stone. British Museum, London (U.K.). *Fig. 48.* Amarāvatī, Relief showing incidents in the life of Buddha. Stone. British Museum, London (U.K.).

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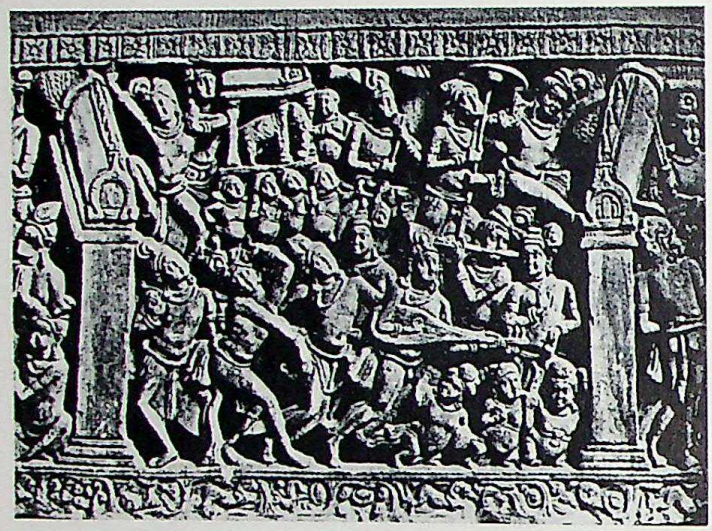

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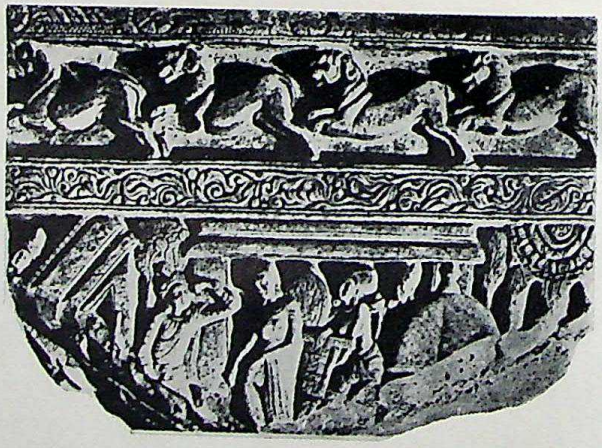

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Fig. 52. Nāgārjunakonda, Ghata Jātaka. Stone.

Fig. 53. Amarāvatī, Head of Buddha. Stone. Musee Guimet, Paris (France).

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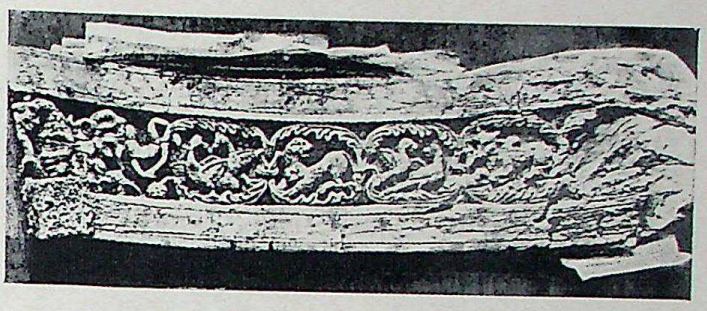

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Fig. 60. Sarnath, Buddha. Stone. Sarnath Museum.
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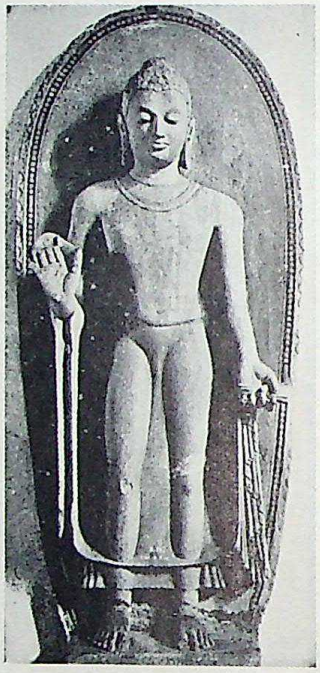

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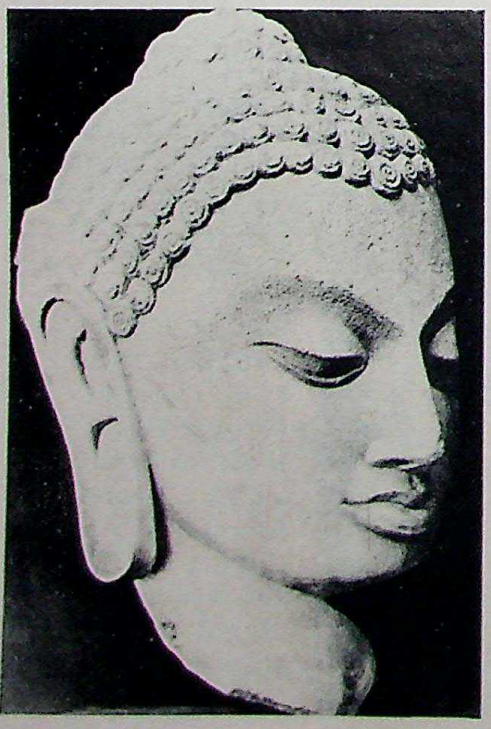

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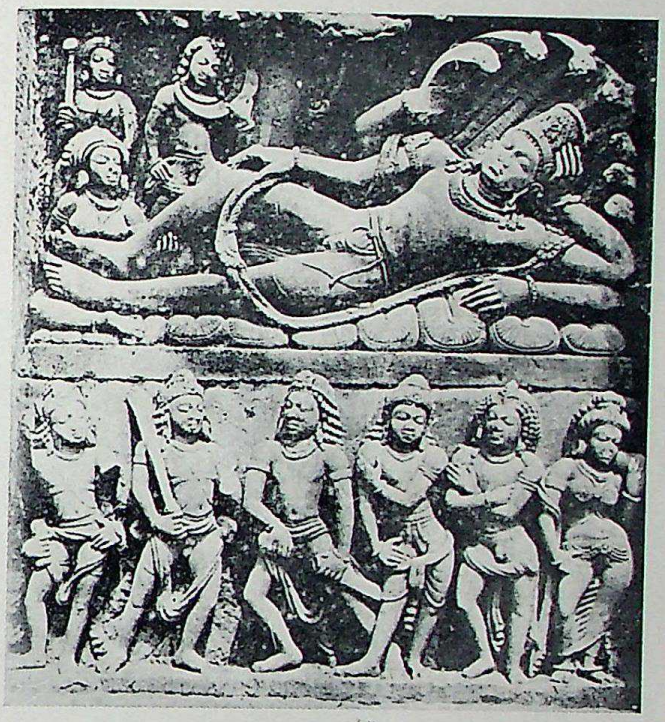

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Fig. 67. Udayagiri, Varāha. Rock-cut.

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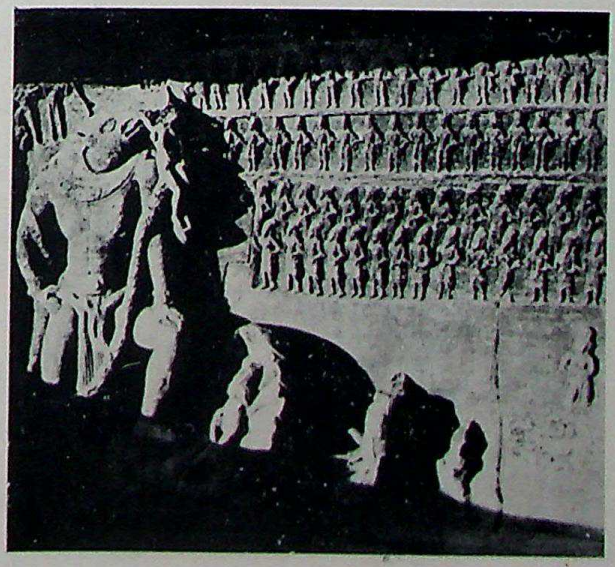

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Fig. 71. Badami, Cave III, Bracket figures. Rock-cut.
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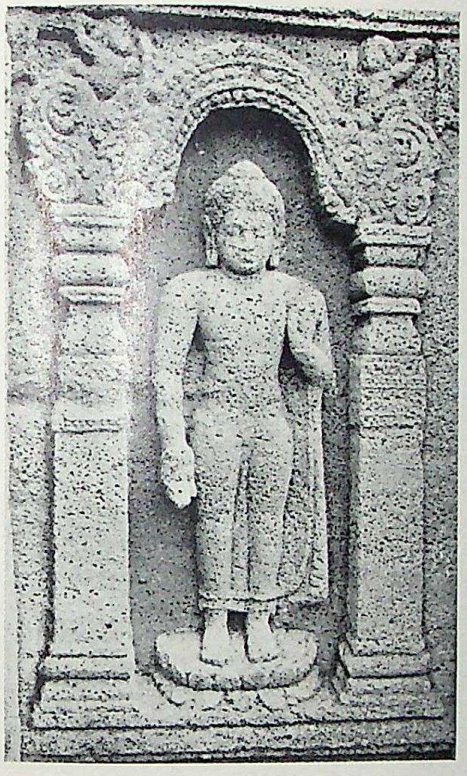

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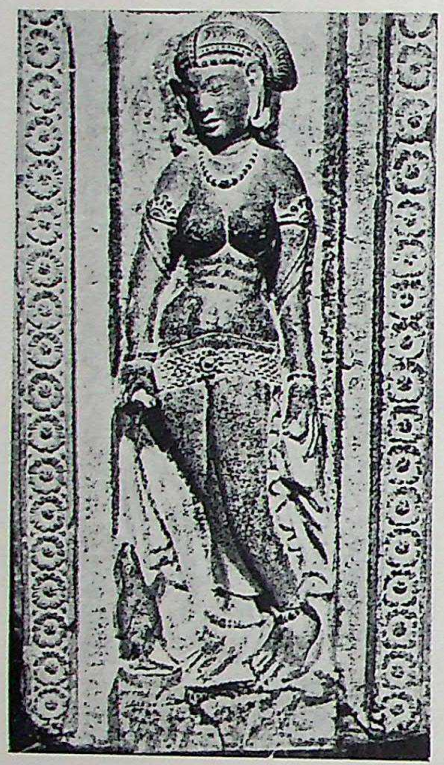

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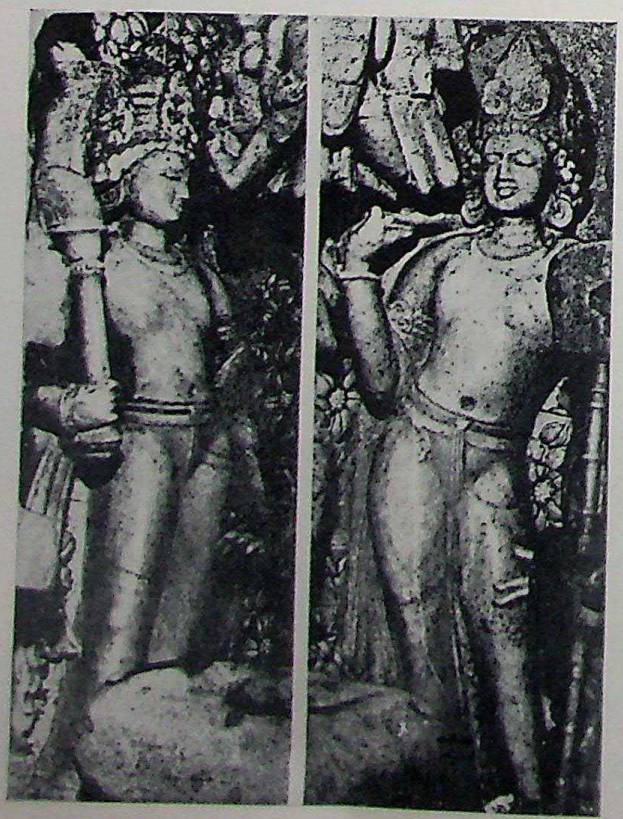

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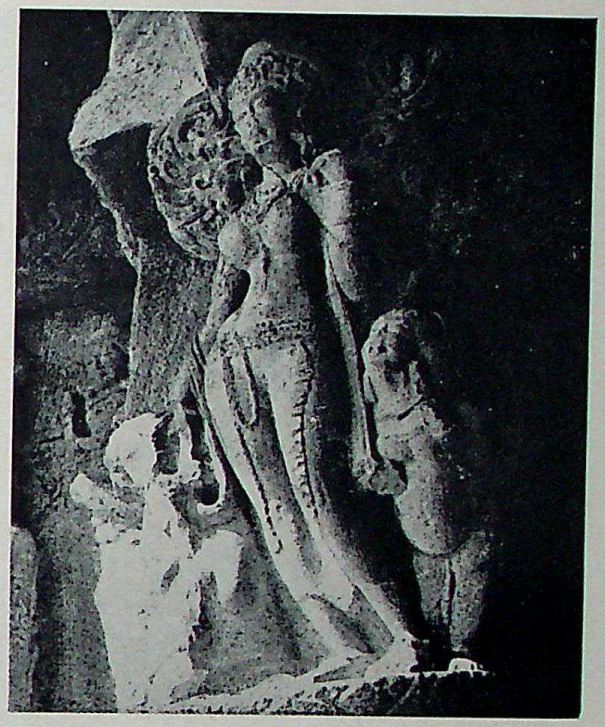

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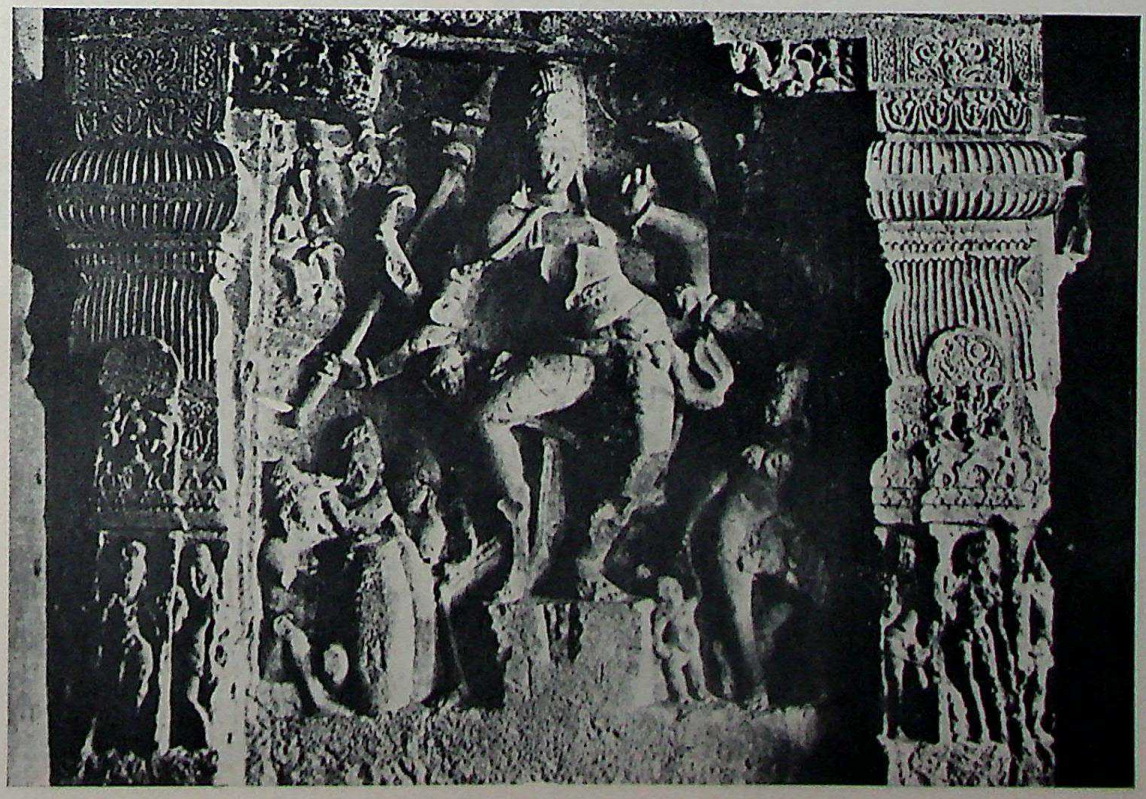

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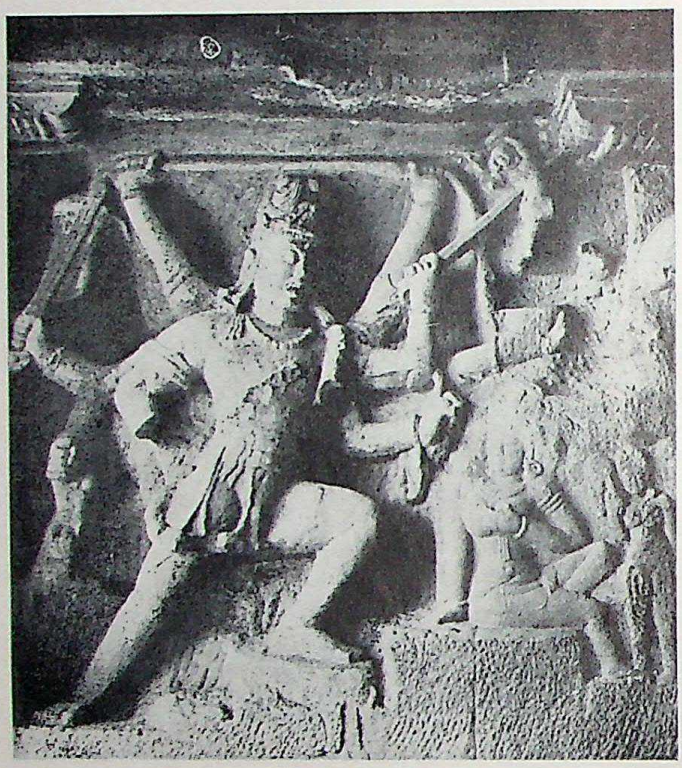

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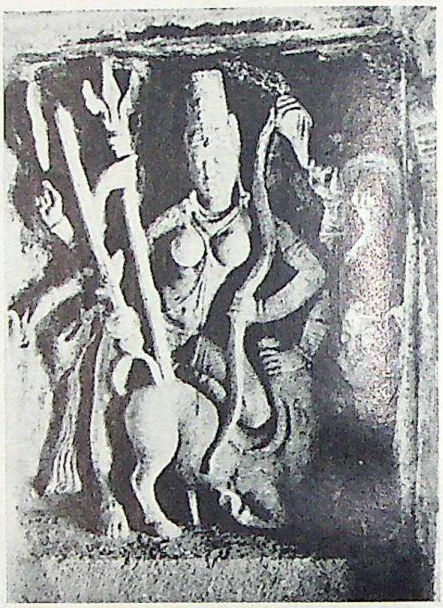

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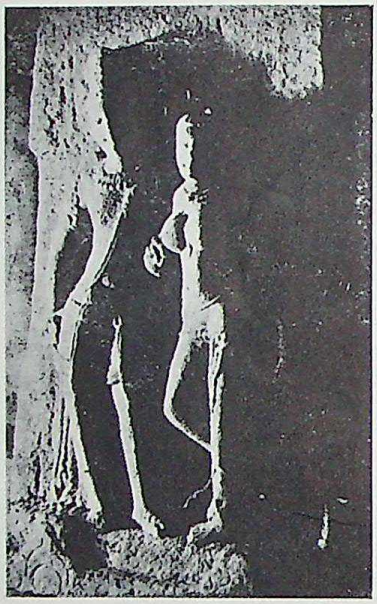

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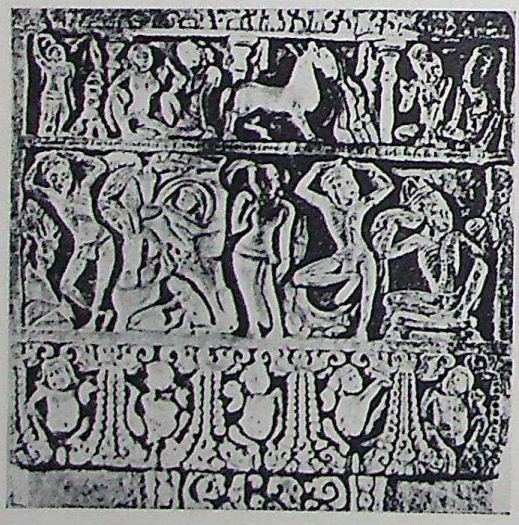

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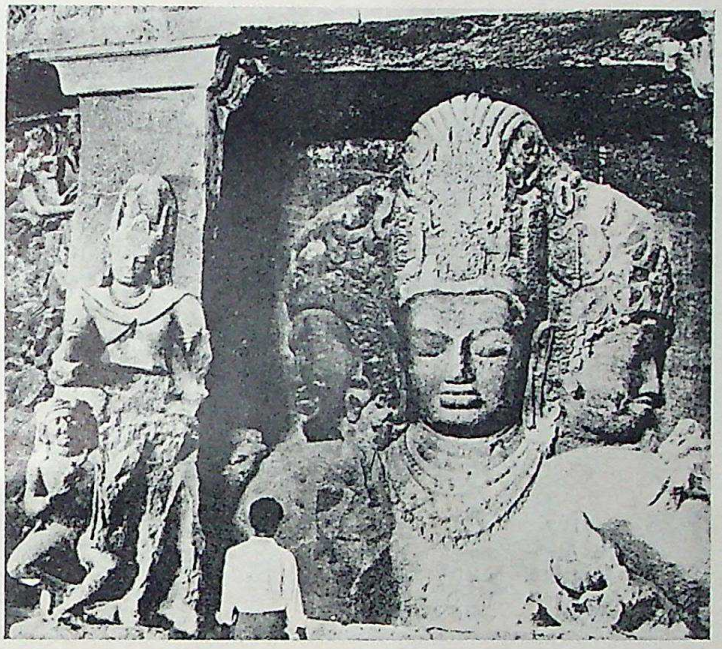

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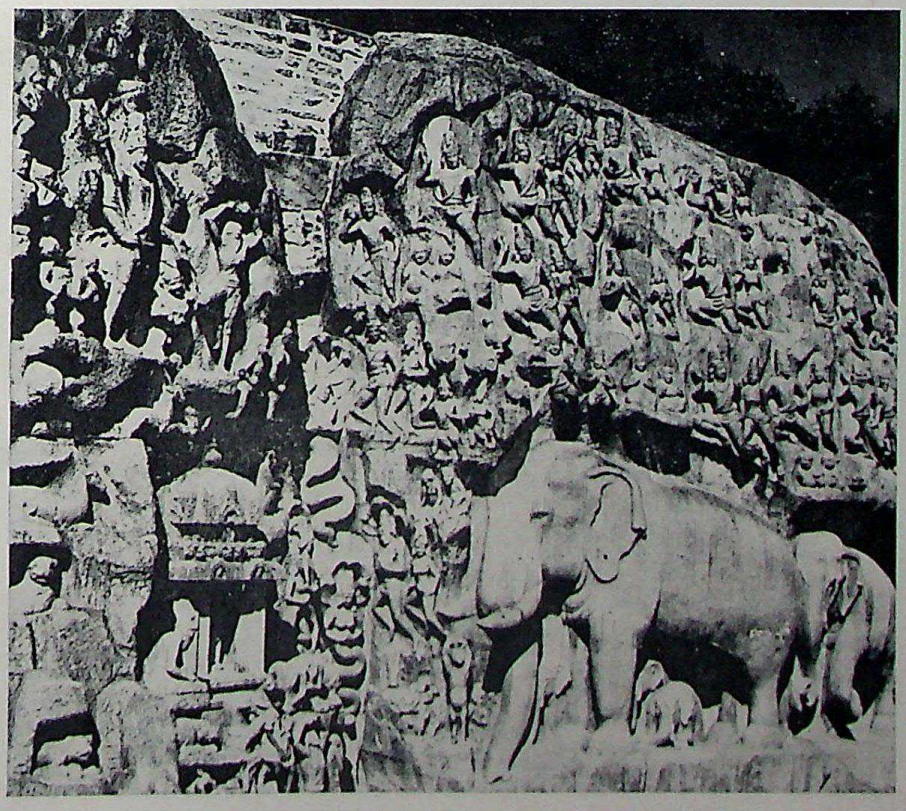

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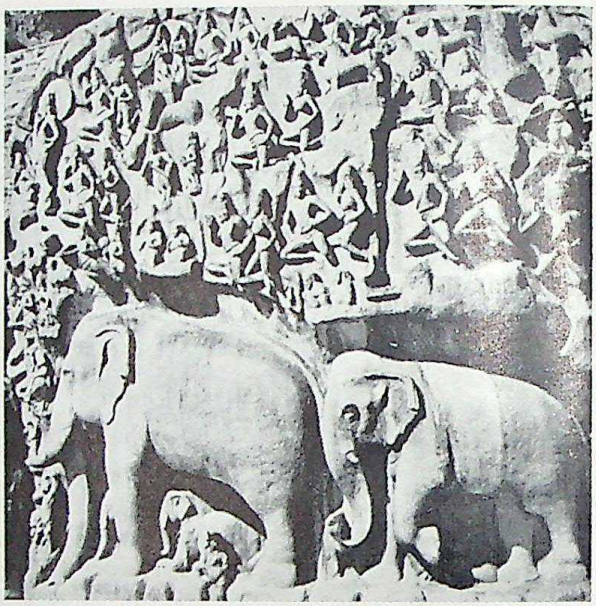

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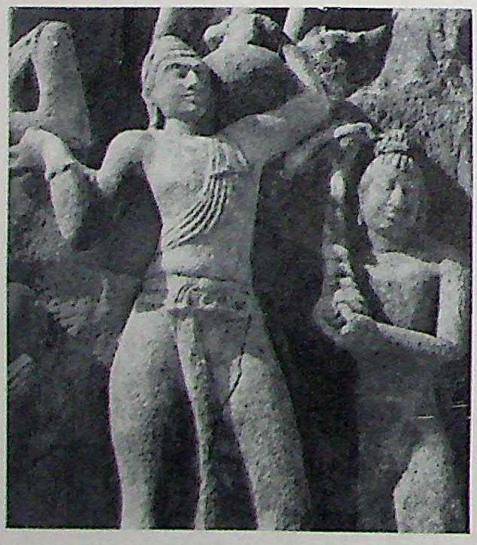

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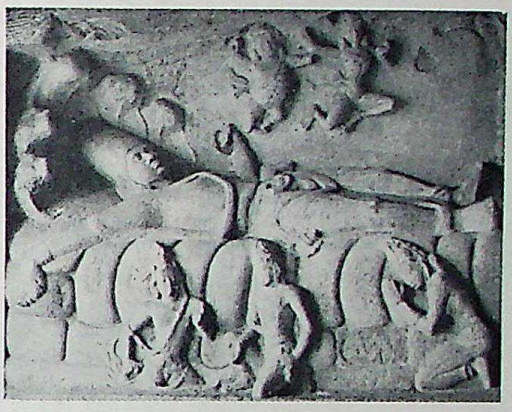

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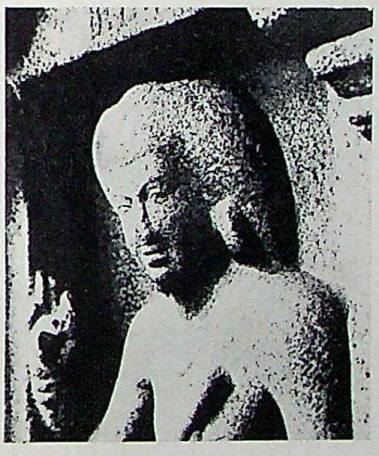

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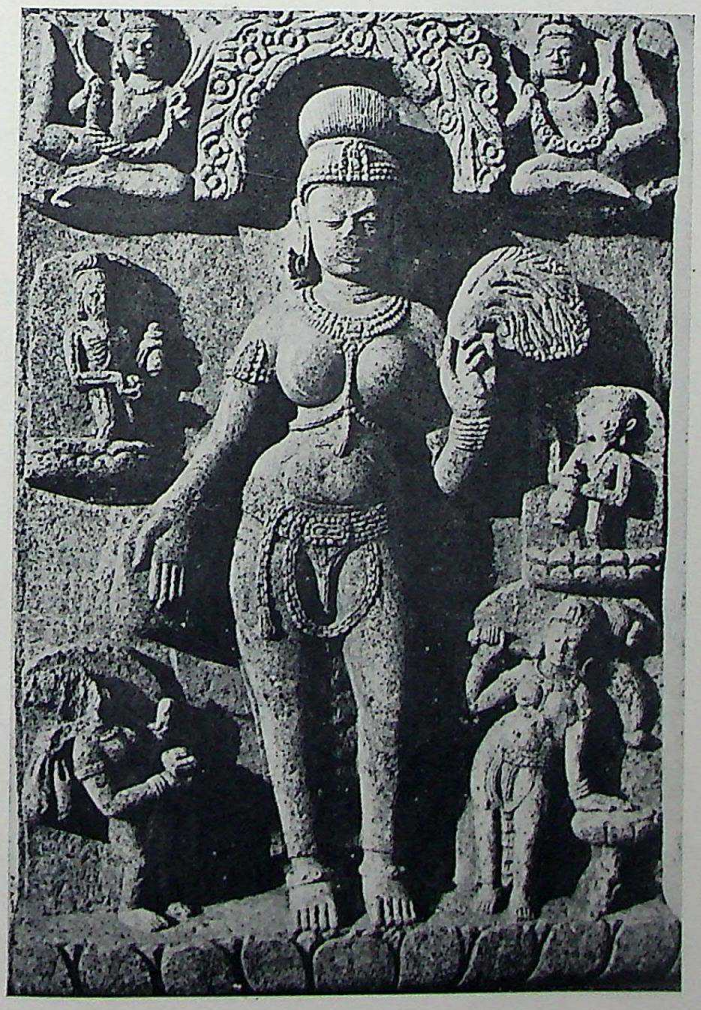

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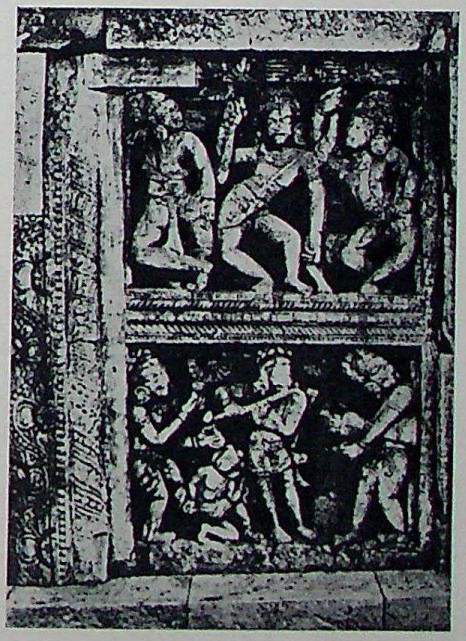

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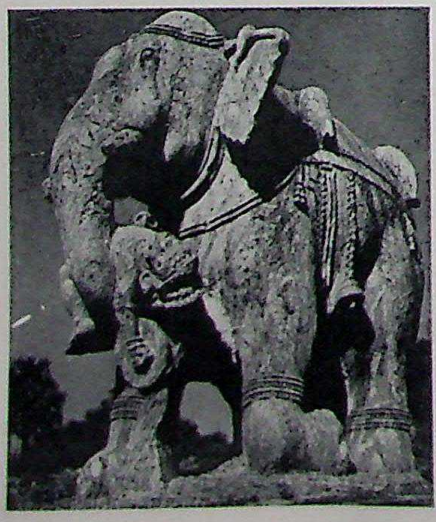

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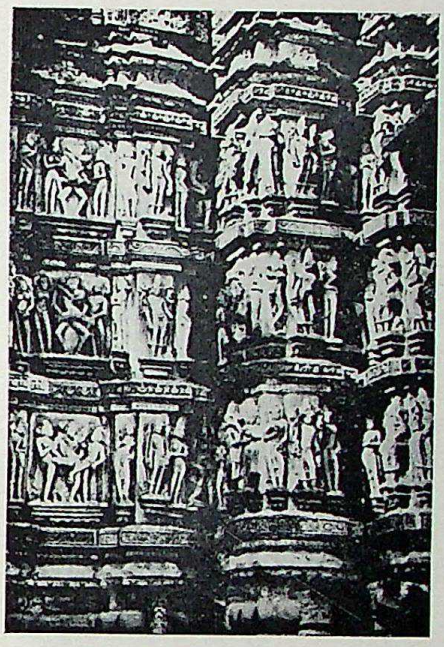

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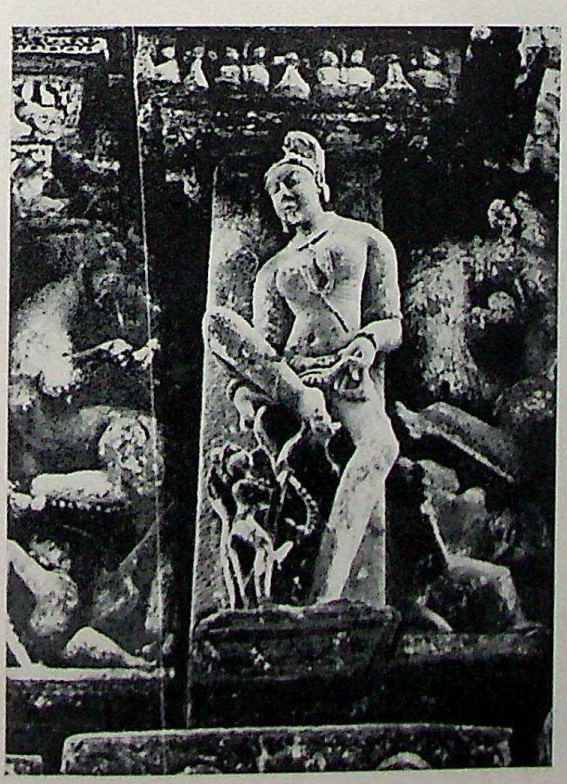

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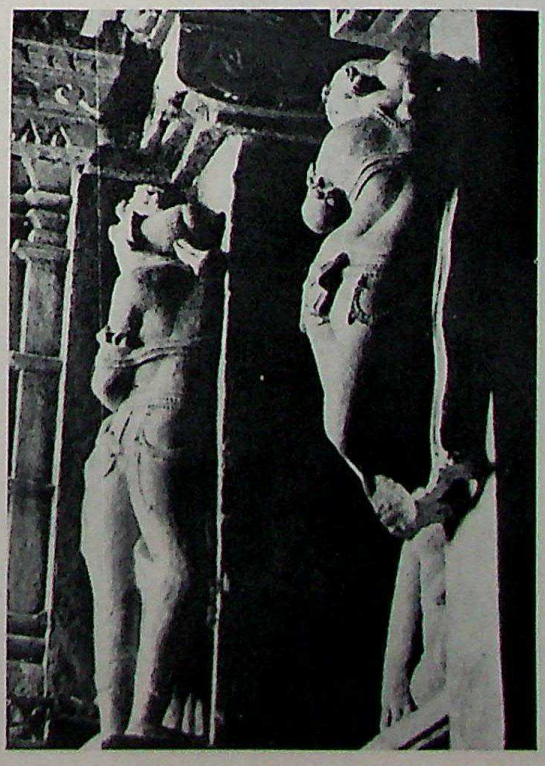

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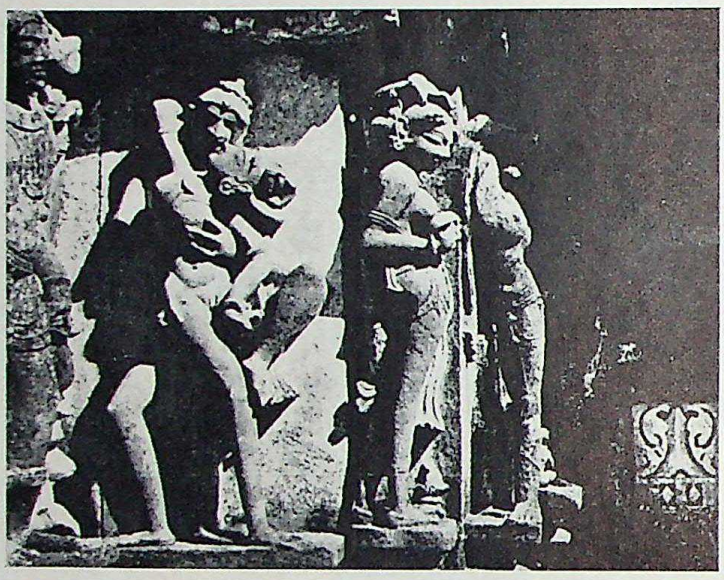

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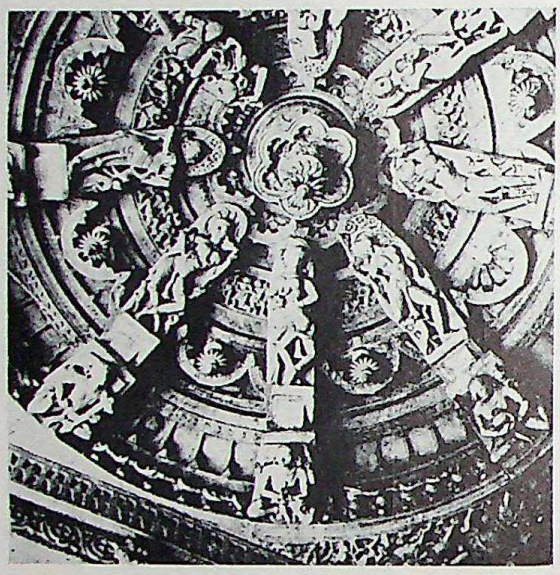

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Fig. 137. Dilwara (Mount Abu), Vimala Vasahi, Part of a domed ceiling of a maṇḍapa. Stone. *Fig. 138.* Modhera, Sun temple, Pillars in sabhā-maṇḍapa. Stone. *Fig. 139.* Dilwara (Mount Abu), Luna Vasahi, Ceiling of maṇḍapa. Stone.

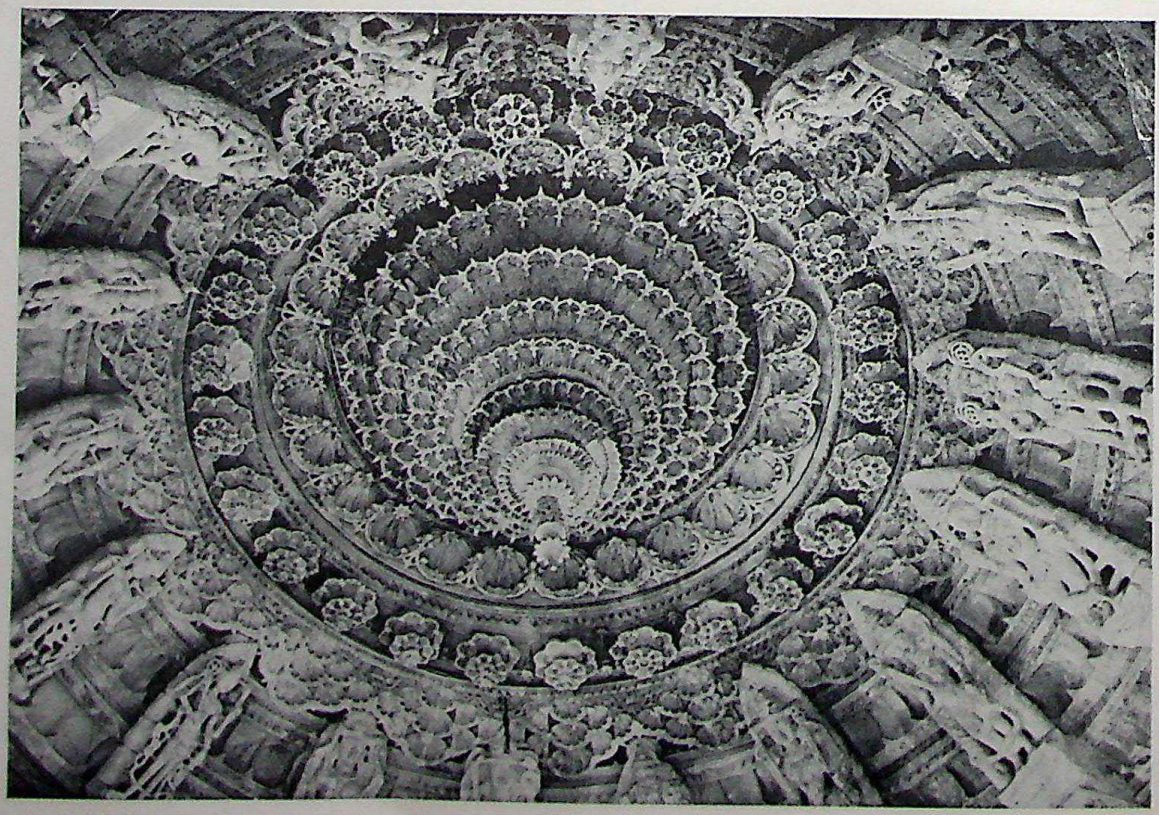

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Fig. 140. Kashmir, Avalokiteśvara. Metal. Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck collection, New York (U.S.A.).
Fig. 141. Kashmir, Buddha. Metal. Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck collection, New York (U.S.A.).

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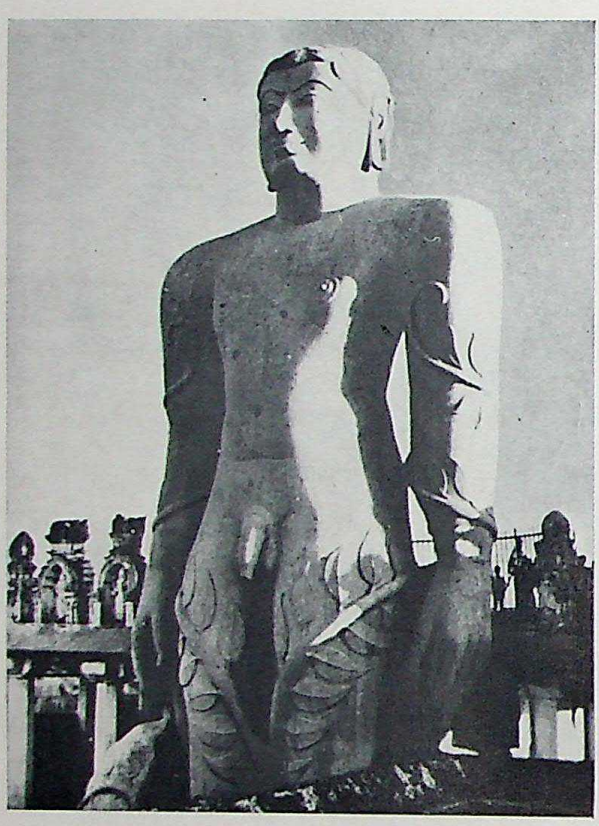

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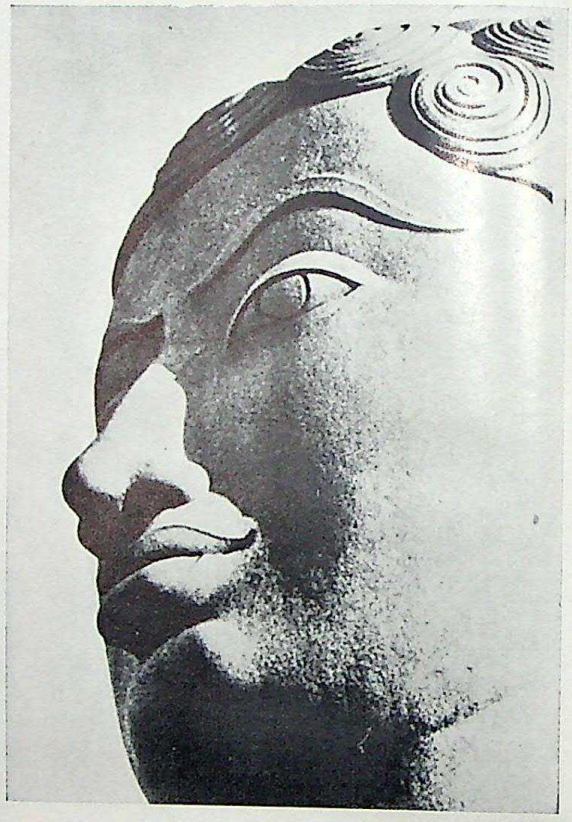

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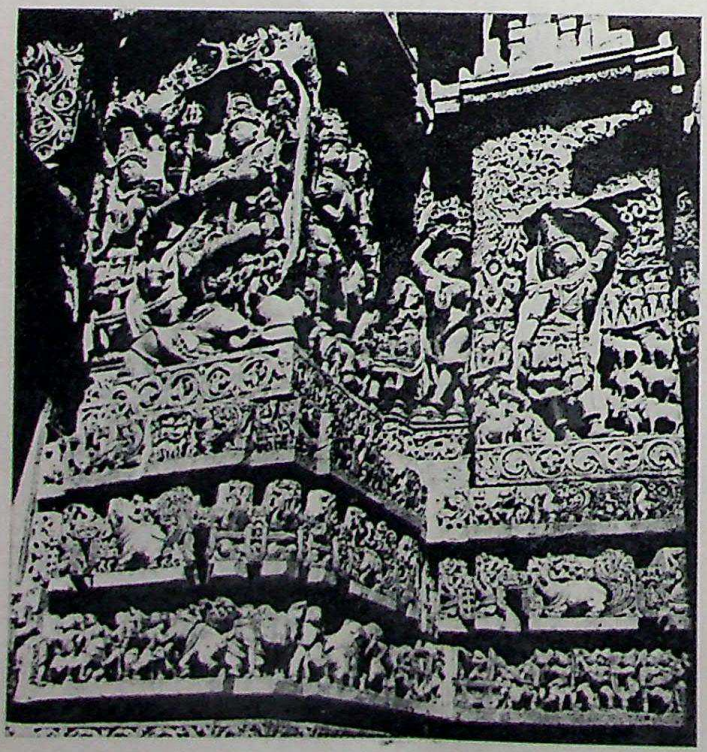

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Fig. 142. Sravana Belgola, Gommateśvara. Stone. *Fig. 143.* Sravana Belgola, Detail of No. 142. *Fig. 144.* Belur, Chennakeśava temple, Sculptural decor on wall. Stone.

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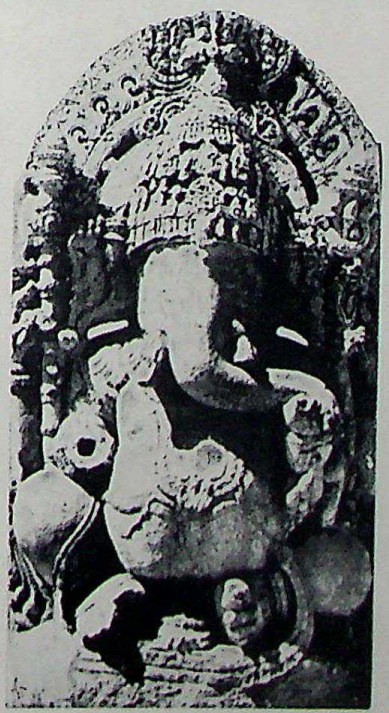

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Fig. 145. Belur, Chennakeśava temple, Madanikā. Stone.
Fig. 146 Belur, Chennakeśava temple, Madanikā. Stone.
Fig. 147. Mysore, Devī. Stone. Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay.
Fig. 148. Halebid, Hoyśaleśvara temple, Gaṇeśā. Stone.

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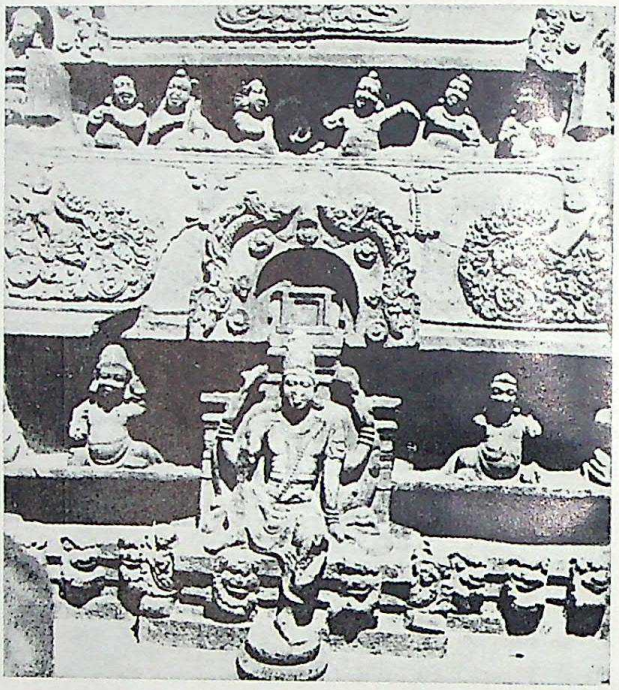

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Fig. 149. Kalugumalai, Veṭṭuvānkoil, Surasundari. Rock-cut. *Fig. 150* Kalugumalai, Veṭṭuvānkoil, Vishṇu. Rock-cut. *Fig. 151* Kumbakonam, Nageśvarasvāmi temple, Statue of a saint. Stone.

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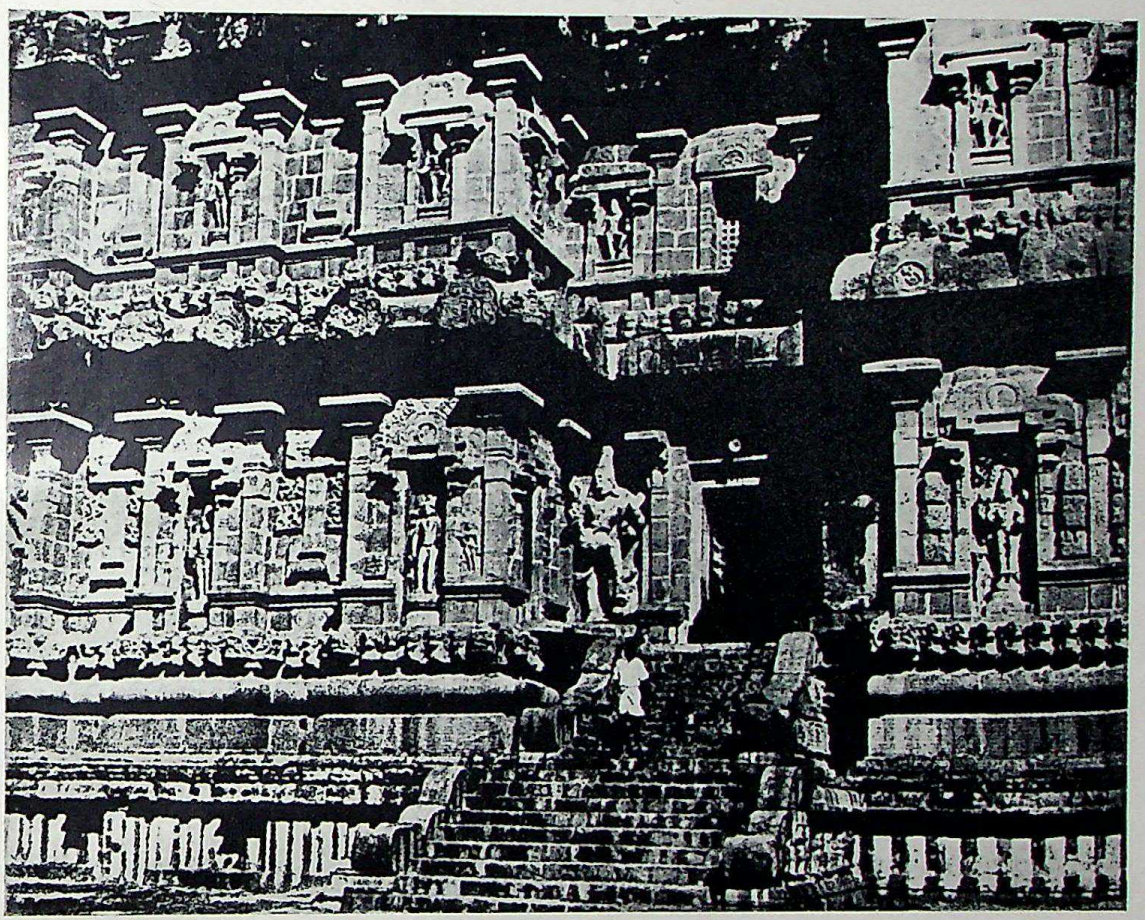

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Fig. 152. Thanjavur, Bṛihadīśvara temple, Wall decor. Stone.
Fig. 153. Thanjavur, Bṛihadīśvara temple, Durgā. Stone.
Fig. 154. Chidambaram, Naṭarāja temple, East Gopuram, Wall decor. Stone.

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Fig. 155. South India, Devi. Metal. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (U.S.A.).

Fig. 156. Thanjavur, Devī. Metal. Sarasvatī Mahal, Thanjavur.

Fig. 157. Thanjavur, Śiva with deer. Metal. Sarasvatī Mahal, Thanjavur.

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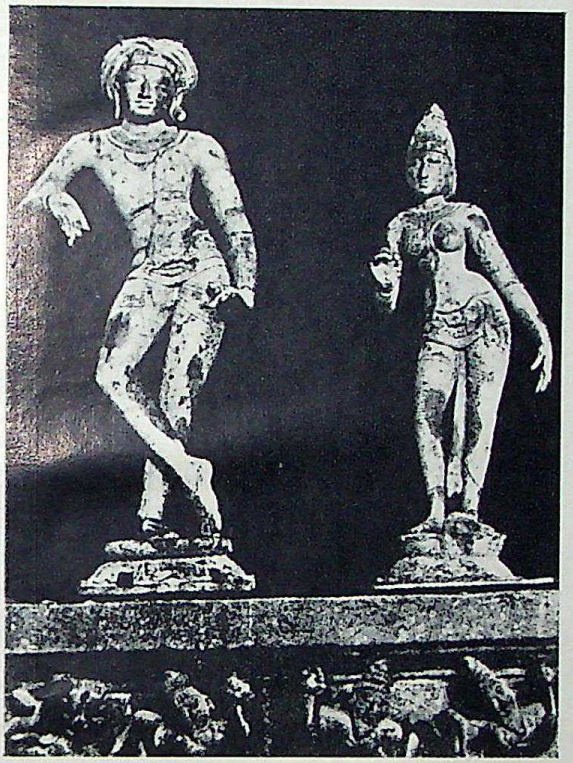

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Fig. 158. Thanjavur, Śiva–Pārvatī. Metal. Sarsavatī Mahal, Thanjavur.
Fig. 159. Thanjavur, Ālingaṇa–mūrti. Metal. National Museum, New Delhi.
Fig. 160. Thanjavur, Kalyāṇasundara. Metal. Sarasvatī Mahal, Thanjavur.

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